Quiet Talks on Personal Problems

S. D. Gordon

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Don E. Brown

QUIET TALKS ON PERSONAL PROBLEMS

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QUIET TALKS ON *PERSONAL PROBLEMS*

BY

S. D. GORDON

Author of "Quiet Talks About Jesus," "Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on Home Ideals,"

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A BIT AHEAD

LIFE is a school. There are hard sums to do; new words to learn, and new meanings of words; knotty problems to tug at and solve, solve partly and then a little more. Knowing some gives zest for more; and always there is more, and never an end. Dear Doctor Babcock sang,

> "Some day the bell will sound,
> Some day my heart will bound,
> As, with a shout
> That school is out
> And lessons done,
> I homeward run."

Yet the day he thought of, while it brought rare delight in knowing and resting, was simply his entering upon an after-course in the Teacher's own room.

These talks are about some of the problems of life. They touch only personal problems, and only a few of them, and only some parts of these. They touch only problems and the phases of them that have come up in my own schoolroom work. That has seemed best. The men who have helped me most have been those who let me draw near, and peer in, and see something of their own struggles and victories, the moist brow

as they tugged, the hard breathing under stress, and the glory-light that came afterwards. All truth must go through the testing fire of one's own experience before it catches fire in others.

I am still working at these problems; still in the laboratory. At times a wondrous quiet light steals in to make it clear where it was dark and bothersome. Always there is a sense of the great Teacher's presence, and the restful thought that *He knows by contact* with things down here. That light gives great joy, and that presence great peace.

THE PROBLEM OF SIN

The Law of Sin.
Six Sides of Sin.
Seven Facts about Sin.
Unloosing the Demons of Sin.
The Logical Result of Sin.
The Sinless Man.
The Open Life-door.
Sin Needs Double Treatment.

The Problem of Sin

The Law of Sin.

The ugly face of sin pushes in everywhere. It has to be reckoned with by everybody. Sin is so ingrained in life that it is constantly being considered. It is one of the most practical of all problems, and one of the most personal, too. If a banker is engaging a new teller to be trusted with the bank's funds he is obliged to think of certain phases of the sin question. If the manager of a great railroad is studying how to operate the vast system to the best advantage of his directors, and for the public's safety and convenience, he is forced to study carefully the sin question, even though not from a moral standpoint.

If a mother and father are eager for their child to be strong and pure and intelligent they need to know something about the law of life, and the results of disobeying it. If a man would live long and hold his vigor; if a maiden would retain her beauty and gentleness of spirit; above all, if one would live a life pure and strong, pleasing to God and helpful to his generation, the problem of sin must be thought about and

grasped, at least in part. And the earlier and more thorough the thinking the better.

In the English translation of an old Greek classic there occurs a remarkable sentence about sin. It is a strange little sentence of just six words, peculiar in its makeup and packed full of condensed vitality: "The wages of sin is death." There are no adjectives, nor adverbs, nor other such qualifying words. There are just three hard, knotty, disagreeable nouns, "wages," "sin," "death"; with only enough other parts of speech to hold these securely together.

These nouns are the bones of the sentence; the other words the ligaments that hold the bones in place. There is no soft padding and rounding of flesh. The intensity of suppressed feeling underneath comes out in the very shortness and sharpness of both the sentence and each of its chief words. There is not even enough stopping on the way to give any coloring to these three rugged, sharp-edged words. Each comes blurting out, goes straight to the bull's-eye of the target, and hits it with a sharp ringing noise —"The wages of sin is death."

That is not true because it is written in this old Book of God. It is in the book because it is true. It had been written down in many other books before it found Paul's pen here. Any breaking of the natural order of life brings a penalty; and the penalty is always a death penalty.

It has been written in the book of nature

as with sharp chisel edge in flinty rock. In the State of Kentucky is a great cave. In the cave is a river flowing. In the river are fish. They are like other fish essentially with one exception, they have no eyes. There is an eye socket. But where the eyeball should be there is instead the withered-up carcass of an eyeball, or none at all. It is a law of life that what we do not use we lose. All of nature's gifts are held by use. These fish did not use their eyes. In the absence of light they could not. And through lack of use persisted in for an untold length of time, they lost both the power of use and the organ of use. The wages of sin is death. Any breakage of a law of life carries with it a penalty, and that penalty is always a death penalty.

That sentence has been written down very big with indelible ink in the book of nations. Years ago Spain was at the head of the great powers of the world. Her ships swept the seas victoriously and defiantly. But Spain as a nation broke one of the great laws of human life. It is a law of life written in the spirit of man that every man shall be free to worship God as he thinks to be right. Spain ruthlessly, with iron-clad fist, broke that law. She said to her sons, "You shall worship not as you think best but as I decree." Her sons showed the inherent greatness of the nation by refusing. And Spain stained her soil with the blood of thousands of her best sons. And Spain died as a first-class power, a second-class, a third-class, and more yet. Her proud position of

leadership was lost. Her death was by suicide. The wages of sin is death. Failure to obey the great simple laws of life contains in itself a sure penalty, a death penalty.

It has been written, and still is being written, in the lives of men, with letters many times traced in a living red. The Wizard of the North in Great Britain, splendid Walter Scott, felt keenly the sharp edge of debt and financial disgrace. He said imperiously to his great brain, "You shall pay these debts," and greatly it responded to his whip. And the law of the body that sets limits to the work that may be done was broken, badly broken. And that great man began dying early, and that remarkable brain knew the death of its powers, before the last ebb of life had slipped from his body. The wages of sin is death. Disobedience of the law of life carries with it a knotted whip, whose cut and slash and sting always means a death of some sort.

Six Sides of Sin.

I ran through the Bible one time rather carefully and found there six words used for sin. I found the word sin itself. Sin, the word underneath our English, literally means missing the mark. Here is a shooting-target; a man stands with rifle up, taking aim; he presses the trigger and the little leaden bullet flies from the rifle's mouth, but it doesn't hit the centre of the target, the bull's-eye; it goes off into one of the rings

or clear outside the target. That is the literal meaning of sin. It is failing to hit that at which you have aimed. Let me ask you, softly, have you ever done that? Have you ever failed to hit the true mark of life at which you have aimed? I do not say you have, and I do not say the mark that somebody else has set up for you to reach. But, just now, as you see things yourself, have you ever failed to reach the true aim of a true life as you have thought of it yourself? once? just once back there somewhere? Because if you have that is *sin*, and sin earns wages, and the wages of sin is death.

There is a second word I found; the word transgression. It means simply going over a boundary line where you have no right to go. Here is a line at the side of your path. You have a right to be here in your own path. You have no right over beyond the line. There is a sign up, "No trespassing allowed." But you go over that line to the other side. That is transgression.

May I ask you quietly, please—have you gone over the line in your conduct where you should not have gone? I do not mean just now the line that others may have set for you. But as you saw things yourself, the line that you regarded as the proper boundary line for a true, pure life. Have you? once? You pulled back again, maybe; but as you look back there's a sure jog over the line there; it's dented in, over and back; two obliques, is that so? I do not say it is; but as you see things yourself? Because if it is so

that is transgression; and transgression is sin; and sin earns wages; and the wages of sin, I regret to remind you, is death.

The third word is iniquity; that is, un-equity, not equity, not equal. It thinks of the path of life as a level, even-faced road, without any breaks-down, no sags, no inequalities; all parts evenly up to a standard level. Whatever breaks that even level surface is un-equity, iniquity. May I ask you again, softly, just for yourself to hear, as you look back over the road of your life thus far, how does it look to you? Is there one sag-down back there? one place where it isn't plumb up to the level which you have thought of as the right level? just one? Maybe more than one; but we are not talking about numbers just now, but about single facts; once so, did you say? Because if it be so that one break-down back there is iniquity, and iniquity is sin, and sin carries with it a return, and, I am very sorry to say, that return is death.

A fourth word I found in this strangely frank book is the word wickedness. Its old, first meaning seems to have been crookedness; that is, winding aside, turning away, falling back. It thinks of the path of conduct as a straight path without any curves or crooks or bends. To turn aside this way or that is wickedness. Would you kindly turn around for a few moments of steady looking? What sort of a line has your life made? Is there any zig-zag in it? any jog? maybe "not much" you say, but some? any?

a jog off once from the straight line? If so, that is described by this old word wickedness, and wickedness is sin, and sin is a wage-earner, and the wages to be paid in is, I much regret to say, death.

The fifth word that pushed its ugly face up into mine in these pages is the word guile. Guile means sneakiness, snakiness, trickiness. It means being one thing inside, and trying to have folks who see only the outer side think you're something else. It means putting clean white-painted shutters up around your life so folks may think that's what you are like clear through. How about that? Has the life always been a clear reflector of the motives and purposes within? If once back there somewhere there has been something of that sort, the intention to deceive another, that is guile, and guile is sin, and sin has wages, and the wages spells out the one word death.

There still is another word used, a very strange word that at first flush may seem to many to be quite too strong, a sort of an extreme putting of the thing. It is in the Revised Version. Jesus' bosom friend, John, says "sin is *lawlessness.*"[1] It would sound a bit extreme to call some persons whom we know *lawless;* yet when the matter is sifted down to the controlling spirit within, underneath, that is found to be the accurate word to use. For all true law is the expression of God's will; all true law is the fine rhythmic

[1] I. John 3: 4.

swing of God in action. And whatever is different from that, preferring our will to His, maybe in ignorance oftentimes of just how much that involves, *that* is against law, it is without law, and so lawless. May I ask you most softly yet—any of that in you? any preferring your own way when that dead-sets you against God's will? a little? Because however little it may seem in our thought of size, that is lawlessness, and lawlessness is the very seed of sin, and sin carries with itself a result, and that result is called death.

Sin is not a disease, a moral disease, nor a misfortune, nor a weakness to be overlooked and maybe gradually overcome. It is an act of the will. When a man sets himself to do the thing that is not right, or to omit the thing that he should do, whether in imagination, or in his speech, or in action, that is the thing called sin.

Seven Facts about Sin.

Now this old sentence ties the word wages up tight to this word sin. There is a certain logical result of sin. It is put here in the simple commercial language of a man getting the proper return for his day's work. Regarding sin's wages there are seven simple facts to be noted; simple indeed but terrific in what they involve.

The first is this, that sin *earns* wages. Where there is sin there is a return coming back into the life where the sin is. There is a law of compensation in sin; something is due and owing to the

man who has sinned. The second fact is that sin *pays* wages. There is no defalcation here. Sin never is bankrupt. It pays. It has a full purse, a heavy bank account, and pays what is due.

Sin *insists* on paying wages. A man may decline to receive. You may be quite willing to forgive the account, and call it square without any further exchanges. But there is always the other side to be reckoned with here, sin's side. It insists on squaring every account. Its books are kept with painstaking accuracy.

I recall a man in an eastern city whom I knew well. He stood high in financial circles, in church and social circles for years. But all the years, as it afterwards proved, he had been untrue to his trust both in financial and in family relations. He staved off payment for long, and when the crisis came stood it off a bit longer with legal processes, but though there was delay the payment was made finally. He had to receive what was due according to the law of men. Yet be it marked very keenly that the law of man's making which compelled him to receive what was due had and has very marked limitations. Man's law deals only with *discovered* sin, and then only when it can be technically proven. And such law can compel a man to receive only a certain portion of the due of wrong, according as men have prescribed. But sin itself is not so restricted. It deals with the actual thing known by the man who does it, and known only by him.

Sin's payment works out insistently, pervasively, irresistibly, even as a fire unquenched reaches every bit of space within the sphere of its activity. Sin *insists* on paying wages. This man's home was utterly broken up, his life companion suffered until her mental balance slipped, his standing among his fellows was wholly gone, his name was disgraced. When the gates of his prison-house were opened again for his bodily liberty, the stoutest of his chains refused to unloose and still held him in their cold, heavy grip. And yet when this much is said, it leaves the greater part unsaid.

The fourth fact to mark is a tremendous fact, intense, dramatic, graphic, even poetic, if such a word can be used of that which is most grimly prosaic. Yet it must be used, for there is a peculiar swing and rhythm to sin's working here. It is this—sin pays its wages *in kind*. I mean that the pay is the same sort of stuff as the sin. That which returns into a man's life is of a piece with the sin that started the return movement. You remember that the old Hebrew, Jacob, was a herdsman, in earlier life working under contract with his uncle. When the settlement period came Jacob was not paid in gold or silver or notes. He received in pay the sort of stuff he was handling all the time, sheep and goats and oxen. He was paid in kind. That is the meaning here.

Sin in the realm of the body brings a result in the body. The body is the open record of a

man's life, to him who can read it. There the skilled physician or the skilled surgeon reads plainly the habits of the life. Sin against the law of mental life brings its sure return in that which effects the mental powers. Sin in contact with others brings a chain of results affecting those others, and in turn those whom they affect. And this is intensified in proportion to a man's relation to the community or state or nation. It is terribly true that no man sinneth unto himself. Sin is the most selfish of acts. It beslimes to some extent everyone we touch, whether we be conscious or unconscious of that touch.

This man Jacob knew bitterly the working of this old law of sin. He deceived his old father; he was deceived by his uncle Laban in the matter of his wife, and ten times over in the matter of his wages as herdsman. He wronged his brother; and his favorite son was wronged by *his* brothers, and that hurt the old man far more than though the wrong had been done to himself. He lied to his father; and was lied to by his sons. As a young man he used a kid in the heartless scheme to deceive his blind, aged father; and years after his sons used a kid to give good color to their attempt to deceive their father. The old man, broken in both body and spirit, knew with a bitter intimacy those last years that sin pays wages in kind. The sin breathes out its own spirit into the whole circle of one's life, and ever returns grown stronger to bother the man who first set it free and sent it out.

Unloosing the Demons of Sin.

David committed a sin in secret. It was supposed to be unknown except to the one who joined him in it. Yet that lawless, utterly selfish act against the purity of life and of a home brought back big bitter wages. The frightful effects of it infected his own home, spread out into his kingdom, left his successor a horrid heritage, and has had a bad influence among men until this day, with the end not yet. The act itself was repeated with cruel variation within the circle of his own family. It led to the inhuman dyeing of his own hands with faithful outraged human blood. And that act in turn was repeated with heartbreaking variation within the family circle.

The man himself was badly hurt in more ways than one; his sense of right as a ruler was badly blurred. His favorite son, tainted with the lawless spirit of his father's act, is received back into the home with no change of heart and with no rebuke for his conduct. That itself was a lawless act, hurtful to the son, and brought a very whirlwind of lawlessness that almost disrupted the kingdom, and that left a debt of blood and of bitter memory that long years did not fully pay.

The prodigal, received back into the home unrepentant, carried with him a hell of anarchy and suffering and heart-burnings. The violence that started in the king's heart, and slew one of his own sons, stayed not until his favorite son fell under its ruthless hand, and left the old father

heartbroken. That first brief act let loose a horrid horde of demons. Sin has a frightful contagion. Ah! this old warrior king, with his splendid talents and great traits of character, learned with a bitter tenacity of memory that sin pays wages in kind.

History tells of a certain portion of the world where two races were brought into intimate contact; a superior race and an inferior, and so remained for many years. The men of that superior race, taking advantage of their position of superiority, with many splendid exceptions, invaded the sanctity of the women of the inferior race, for passion's sake. And for long years, through successive generations, the daughters of those injured women have been debauching the sons of those men, until that bit of country has been made red with precious human blood, and wet with bitterest human tears. And deep in the very family fibre of life there is woven inextricably in, the truth that sin pays wages in kind.

A fifth fact to mark is this: sin pays *in instalments*. The payments begin at once. The very immediate act of sin has in it the beginning of its results, and those results continue bit by bit, with a grimly patient faithfulness, at regular periods through the years. The human eye blurred by its own sin is not always able to see the results. The human mind dulled by its own decisions is not always keen enough to appreciate what is going on, until passing years pile up the results, and they are forced upon the attention,

and gazed upon with wonder. And sometimes we hear talk about mysterious providences among religious folk, and of hard luck among others; but never a bit of suffering has come into any life but it could be traced back, were our knowledge full and our eyes keen enough, back step by step in regular logical sequence to some initial human act of wrong.

The sixth fact should be coupled with the fifth, the payment is *in full.* There are no defalcations here; no settlement by agreement of fifty cents on the dollar. But dollar for dollar, and each full weight, and with full measure of cents, is paid. No amount of reluctance on our part, no attempt at shirking will make any difference. A man is very apt to grow generous here. He will forgive the account due him. He is even eager to "call the thing square." "No," this inexorable paymaster sternly says, "you will step up and receive the full stint of what has been earned."

A French writer has described a scene in the old province of Brittany, that juts out into the sea on the west of France. A man was walking along the seashore on a bright afternoon enjoying the air and sea. Above the sky was blue, the sun shining, the air invigorating, and the view off very beautiful. And the man walks along leisurely, thinking only of the enjoyment of his surroundings. He does notice absent-mindedly that his feet sink into the sand rather much. Then they sink a little more, until he begins to think it strange; then all at once it flashes upon

him that the tide is out, and he is in a bed of quicksand.

With the instinctive dread of a native, he knows well what that means, and instantly turns in horror towards the mainland to escape. But his quicker, intenser movements make his feet sink in deeper, up to the ankles. He plunges madly this way and that, calling wildly for help. But there is nobody to hear, and the more he plunges the deeper he sinks. Now he turns to the left, seeking to find a footing beyond the edge of the treacherous bed of quicksand. And now frantically to the right, and now up towards mainland, but he only sinks down the deeper into the smooth, slippery sand. Now the sand is to his knees, and now over his loins; then its pressure crowds in about his vitals, while he stretches out his arms wildly and shrieks piteously for help, and the pressure is seen in the blood coming from mouth and nose and ears. And now only the head is above the smooth level of pretty sand, and now just a pair of glaring, blood-shot eyes, and now a tuft of hair. Then only a smooth stretch of pretty shining sand. And above the sky is blue, the sun shining, the air so fine, and the sea laughing.

That is the working of nature's law. It is true alike of all her laws. Here it was the law of gravitation that ruthlessly, mercilessly, inexorably drew down the man who had given himself unwittingly over to its power. The same action marks this law of sin of which we are talking.

Whoever comes within the sphere of its power will find it working in the same quiet, sure, merciless way. Law knows no mercy. Oh! yes, there is a provision sometimes made in human law for certain days of grace in meeting financial obligation. But it simply means that, if the brief time allotted find you unready with the money, the house may be sold from over your head, and you left in the cold night unsheltered. That is surely great grace.

Here in this old tale of the native of Brittany is an illustration of the working of law, the logical sequence of cause and result. With slow pace, bit by bit, with mercilessly sure tread the law of sin works out its logical way endlessly. Sin pays in instalments, but in full, with a final fulness beyond anybody's power to compute.

There is a seventh fact to be noted here, that should be marked very keenly, and not forgotten. Sin is *self-executive*. That is to say, every sin pays its own bills. Sin keeps an independent bank account and checks out all its own payments. And it can be said very positively that there is no result of sin except that which works out of itself. Yet that is terrific beyond the power of the imagination to picture, or of words to tell. You may, if you choose to, leave God out of your thinking about this. Yet that does not affect the tremendous fact put down here. Sin has bound up in itself all the terrific consequences that ever come. The act of sin unlooses the demons bound within, and they do but carry out to the full what the

man began. Sin works automatically. It is self-executive.

The Logical Result of Sin.

This cold, calm, strange sentence says that the wages of sin is *death*. What is death? There is no question much harder to answer. I can tell what it is *not*, and that will help to clear the ground a bit. It is not the passing of life out of the body merely. That is the thing we all think of first and most when death is spoken of. Yet that is a very small item, a mere detail of death, painful in itself, and with distressing results to those who tarry behind, but the smallest part of death. And death is not ceasing to be, cessation of existence. That cannot be. A spirit does not cease to be and cannot, and man is essentially a spirit-being. Good were it for some men if death meant for them an utter cessation of existence.

And it can be said with great positiveness that death is not arbitrary punishment meted out by God. God has sometimes been held up to criticism as a cruel, unfeeling sort of tyrant, taking pleasure in dealing out punishment to sinful men; not so much of late years as formerly, but still a good bit; always too much. Any is too much and a slander upon Him. We borrow our ideas of punishment from men, and among men punishment is very largely arbitrary. That is, it is decided upon, chosen out to be inflicted upon the guilty one. A child in school disobeys some rule and perhaps persists in the disobedience. The

teacher decides upon some punishment, either whipping, or detention, or extra work, or to be deprived of some privilege. That of course is arbitrary, discretionary, decided as the teacher judges to be best. A soldier breaks the rules of camp, or of the discipline of army life. His officer decides what punishment shall be inflicted upon him. A man is found guilty of an offence, and in most instances there is discretion with the judge to decide what punishment he shall suffer.

Let it be said very plainly that death as a result of sin is not in any way like that. It is *the logical result of sin.* It is included in the sin. Sin and death are only different parts, or phases, or stages of the same thing. Sin is death begun. Death is sin finished, worked out to its conclusion. Sin is death in the green; death is sin dead ripe. Sin is the seed; death is the fruitage of that seed. Death is the logical culmination of sin, the final stage. Death begins with the beginning of sin. All unsuspected by those standing by, the beginnings of the pallor of death have already come where sin is done.

All unconsciously to the man committing the sin, the tide of life has already begun its faint, imperceptible ebb. All living men are partially dead. Death is a gradual state until finally complete. In its essence death is separation from God. All life is the breath of God. Sin is cutting one's self off from God. It is like gripping a man by the throat with tightening clutch until the breath of life departs. Sin is choosing to

leave God out. The very act cuts off the source of life. The grammar of the verb to sin is peculiar to itself. It is this: present tense, to sin; first future tense, following instantly on the present, to suffer; in the second future tense the verb changes its form, it becomes a noun—hell.

That hateful, ugly word hell, which the lips utter only by compulsion when they must, for the sheer pain of it, is simply the name given to the place where death reigns; where God has been excluded. They who prefer to leave God out will gather together at some time by a natural moral affinity, or gravitation. The name used for such meeting-place in this old Book is that hurting word hell. Hell is death's abode. God shut out, no life, death, death regnant—that is hell.

Is there anybody listening here who has not sinned? If so, I'll wait a moment for you to withdraw, please, for to-day's talk is not for you. We all seem to be staying in. Well, then, by our own confession, we are under the action of this law of sin. There is a death sentence written over every face here. Sometimes it can be plainly seen. Sometimes to our dim eyes there seems to be no suggestion of such a thing. But were our eyes keener to read spirit-lines and spirit-fact, we would find through the flashing eye, the clear ruddy skin, the firm rounded flesh, a distinct tracing of this strange thing called death.

I have no doubt that many, maybe most, of these listening so kindly and patiently are mem-

bers of the Christian Church. But as I run my eye over your faces I cannot say who are church members and who are not. And I am glad for the purpose of this talk to-day that I cannot. For this law of sin recognizes no such distinctions. There has been a thoughtless thinking, without it being said in so many words, that being within the secure walls of church membership shields one from the action of this law of sin. But that is not so. Whoever is thinking so, maybe half-unconsciously thinking so, is befooling himself here. This law of life which is a law of death applies fully wherever there is life, and—sin.

Well, then, we are all under the action of this law and all under sentence of death, sin's logical conclusion. What can we do about it? Of ourselves we cannot do a thing to relieve the situation. The thing we need is life in place of death; the utter cutting out of the seeds of death and the putting in of new seed, the seed of life, a new life. There are only three ways that anything can be gotten, that is, proper ways: by inheritance, by purchase, and by gift. We have lost our inheritance of life. It has been forfeited by our alliance with the one thing that is utterly opposed to life. There is not enough wealth in the vaults of London and New York, Paris and St. Petersburg, nor in the mines, to buy any. The wealthy people are merely money-wealthy, not life-wealthy, so far as their gold is concerned. And we have none for ourselves, much less to give away. What shall we do? We are all in bad

shape. It is a blind alley we are all heading up in. Would it sound any better, or less bad, if instead of "blind alley" I used a foreign word for it, *cul-de-sac*, and hid the ugliness of the truth behind that? Better just use blunt old English, that the plain truth come more plainly, bluntly home.

The Sinless Man.

But here steps one upon the scene of life from another sphere—Jesus. By His own word, and by the frank confession of those who know Him most intimately, He is free from sin. The Jew who so foully betrayed, and the Roman who so unfairly gave sentence of death, agreed fully in this. Being without sin, He is not under action of this law. He steps on the scene. And in effect He says, "It grieves me to the quick that this great race of splendid men is in such bad shape." But mark you keenly, and let the truth here be said with the greatest reverence, not even Jesus the Son of God can change the working of this law of life. He came not to break but to fulfil.

What can He do? This is what He *did* do. He went down, of His own voluntary accord, went down to where men's sin had driven man. He tasted death. Tasted? aye, drained its dregs to a bitterness not known by any other before or since. He went down into the throat of death, into the mouth of hell, and seizing death by the throat throttled it, and then rose by the moral

gravity of His own being up to a new life, a deathless life for all men. And now Jesus offers that new deathless life as a free gift to all who will accept it, and accept with it the conditions of life.

But will you kindly note as keenly as you ever noted anything that there are three qualifying facts that belong in here. There has been a sort of a weak sentimentalism, common in some quarters, about salvation through Jesus, as though by some sort of legerdemain all the evil results of sin were at once wiped out, and all the benefits of the new life come fully in by means of an assent to Jesus' offer of salvation. It does seem sometimes as though there were those who say, "We can do about as we please, indulge in sin as suits us now, and then after a while,—well, there's Jesus, He's loving; God is love, He is too loving ever to let anyone be lost. We'll just line up that way and pull through all right." I do not mean that I have ever heard anybody put it so bluntly, and baldly, and irreverently as that into *words*. But I have surely heard a great many say it loudly with their lives. Better, maybe, if they had put the language of their lives into the language of the lips, that its very baldness might shock them into thinking of the truth.

The first qualifying fact to note is this: accepting Jesus does not nullify nor neutralize the results in this life of past sins. That man who lost his arm through a drunken debauch will remain so, without the arm, crippled in body and in activity to the end of the years. Those years

absorbed in selfish pleasure-seeking are lost forever, and the mental strength that was not held and matured by earnest effort can never again be gotten. The grave of the past never gives up its dead, only their spectres to trouble and haunt.

The broken home circle can never be restored. A new one may be made, but never the old. That saintly mother, grief-stricken in heart through somebody's sin, broken in strength and shattered in her years—that is not changed. There *may* be some softening of after-years, but the old deep scars upon heart and body and life are never removed. Time softens greatly where conditions are changed, but under all remains the old wound, and it pains sharply when a bit of damp weather comes. The man who through dissipation has depleted his vitality never will be, never can be, either in body, or in his mental powers, or in his spiritual perception and grasp, what he was meant to be, and would have been. The bird with the broken pinion never does soar as high again. Its broken wing has forever broken the strength and swiftness of his flight.

The man may be fully forgiven, and blessedly changed, and wondrously used, but never can he be the man God meant, nor be used in service as he could have been had God had the use of his full, unstunted, unwasted powers. Selfishness is a spirit-paralysis. The powers never fully recover. The daily grubbing for gold, with no high spirit-motive gripping and sweetening, forges a finely

woven network about all of the powers. And however the life may afterwards be surrendered to Jesus the hampering movement is never wholly gone. It has been rutted deep into the cellular tissue of the body.

The heart may become wholly, blessedly pure, the motives and impulses all sweetly and fragrantly cleansed, but the mark of the past is dented deep in the body, the energies, the activities, the outlook. This is the simple, sad, tragic truth. It should all be said in softest tone of lowered voice, for we are talking of our brothers; and said too with a hush of shame over the spirit, for we are talking about ourselves here together. But it should be *said*, very distinctly, with the words pronounced clear and sharp, that the process may be stopped instanter.

Opening the Life-door.

There is a second fact to be put in with hard, sharp emphasis. Life through Jesus comes only as fully as the opened door permits. You will note that I am not speaking of heaven, the after-life, but of this tremendous life we are living now. There is a truth here for the after-life, too, no doubt. The after-life will be shaped upon the life lived here. A man's life here becomes the mould or standard for that great after-life. Of course this does not affect a man's salvation; the *fact* of it. But then, who is there who is willing to be saved by the skin of his teeth, pulled in at the end of a rope, without a covering

rag to his life, barely in, breathlessly sprawling where he has gotten in!

This new life through Jesus begins now as quickly as the spirit's door is opened to Him. It begins coursing through all a man's being. It affects all of his powers. It touches into new vitality and new beauty every gift with which man is endowed. But it can come only as it is allowed to come. The man's will always remains supreme in his life. Even when God's will is made supreme in a life, as it should be, it is by the imperial act of the man's own will. A man's will is never greater in action than when all its great fine-grained strength is used in yielding to God's will. A man can keep the door partially shut.

Will it seem severe if I say that *most men* do? Yet the truth seems to force just that statement out into plainest speech. And a partially opened door means only partial life incoming, and partial death remaining. I remember an old, dear friend of mine, a splendid man in his strong, gentle spirit, a great leader among men, *the* great leader in the movement with which his life was and is identified. Yet he died when a man should be in the mature fulness of his powers. For certain habits of life common among men, not commonly regarded as wrong, and not wrong except as being against the law of life in the body —yet that is a great and grievous exception— sapped his vitality, and poisoned the body, and led to the death that should have been delayed for years.

And as I speak of him I recall another great leader, in another sphere of activity in the religious world, who slipped the tether of life when in the prime of his years, for like reasons. These men sinned against the law of their bodies. And that is sinning against the God of our bodies. God needs us and our strength. Whatever takes us away before His time, or takes away our strength, hampers God in His activities among men just that far. They sinned unwittingly no doubt, thoughtlessly, and yet there is apt to be a certain wilfulness in such thoughtlessness. Many men sin ignorantly. Yet such ignorance is a sin, for we can know and should know how best to live for the glory of God.

Jesus' gift of life is both for the after-life, the eternal life, and for the present time. The present life affects far more seriously than we know the fulness of life in that after-life. Only as the door is swung fully open can Jesus give fulness of life here and after. Full surrender to the sway of Jesus, becoming in practice more really full as new light comes, is the open door to full life from Jesus' hand. Partial surrender means partial life.

There is an exception to be noted here. Fulness of life does not mean absence of bodily death *yet*. For Jesus' plan of life has not yet been fully carried out. He is to reign until all enemies are put under His feet; *then* the last enemy, death, is to be put down, too, but not until then. Jesus' redemption will be com-

pleted on His return. Meanwhile, with this exception noted, there is fulness of life through fulness of His sway within.

Sin Needs Double Treatment.

The third qualifying fact goes to the heart of the whole matter. It really has been said already in another way, but should be put in again for the emphasis of repetition, and for the plainest putting of it into words. It is this: there is one sin that even the blood—say it very softly and reverently—that even the blood of Jesus cannot cleanse away; that is, the sin, *any* sin, that *I cling to.* This is going to the very tap-root of the whole matter. His blood avails only against the sin that I break with, turn out of doors. Sin needs double treatment if it is to be thoroughly gotten rid of, first by the man who sins, then by that *Man* who never sinned; the first must use a sharp-edged knife, the *Second* will use a red stream, and then fire; the first must cut it out, and cut it off, so far as his will can do that, and *it can* do it fully; the Second will take away its guilt and power.

Oh! for a band of *sin-fearers;* men with a horror and dread of sin in any shape, and under any guise; a band of *sin-haters* and *sin-fighters,* who will fight it tooth and nail, day and night, mercilessly, relentlessly, with all the power of loving tact and diplomacy, and all the rugged, immovable obstinacy of mountain rock; and who will give Jesus full entrance into their lives,

push the door clear back till its knob scratches the inner wall, that so He may come in full face with all His glorious flood tide of life.

There's a simple story told of a longshoreman in Scotland. He was a rough, ignorant man, and a hard drinker. One night he went in an intoxicated condition to a mission hall, intending to make a disturbance and break up the meeting. But a tactful Christian gentleman came and sat down by his side and began talking with him. He quieted down and listened. Then the two kneeled in prayer. And that strange thing, called in religious talk conversion, must have taken place, for when they rose from their knees he was evidently a different man. There was a new look in his face, a changed spirit looked out of his eyes, and his manner was gentle and deferential.

In a voice affected by the deeper feelings within he thanked the gentleman, saying he must go home and tell his wife, and went out. As he entered his home his wife was just going up the stairs with their son to put him to bed. He called to her, "Come down stairs, lassie, with the lad; I've been converted; we must have prayers in our house." And she muttered aloud, "Hehh! drunk again!" But he said, "Nay, nay, lassie, I'm na drunk; I tell you I've been converted; bring down the lad, and we'll have prayers." And wondering in her heart what had come over her husband she came down, and the three of them knelt on the bare floor to pray.

But he didn't know how to pray. He never had prayed. His lips didn't know any word of that sort. And the situation was getting embarrassing. There they are, the three, kneeling in silence, the sleepy boy wondering, and the awed wife wondering, and the man himself wondering what to say. Then like a quick flash he remembered how they had done in the city years before when the Queen had been there. And as that came to him, he picked his knit cap from his head and, whirling it in the air, cried out with an earnest, reverent cry, "Hooray for Jesus! hooray for Jesus!" Then they went to bed.

When I realize how Jesus came down here, and stepped into man's place, and bore a death that naturally would not have come to Him, I feel like uncovering head, and heart, and will, and with the deepest reverence of love, repeating the longshoreman's prayer, "Hooray for Jesus."

The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life *through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

THE PROBLEM OF DOUBT

Perplexed Searchers.

Taking away a Cripple's Crutches.

Sure Marks of Honest Doubt.

The Best Book on Christian Evidences.

The Spirit of Search.

The Book.

The Man.

The Call of the Christ.

The Problem of Doubt

Perplexed Searchers.

At one time I used to meet frequently, for a short while, at a hotel dining-room table, a bright young college man who was well informed and attractive. One day he introduced the subject of religion. He doubted the divinity of Jesus, or rather he said he did not believe that He was divine. Again, he as openly said that he did not believe the Bible. I said to him as gently as I could, so as not to seem to be arguing, that I presumed he had examined rather carefully into these questions on which he expressed himself so positively. To my surprise he calmly admitted that he had not. He had not given the Bible one careful reading through, neither had he examined the facts about Jesus. When I mildly expressed some surprise at his willingness to give such a positive opinion regarding matters that he had not examined he did not seem concerned, but rather to enjoy restating his opinions.

When the conversation turned on other subjects, especially those connected with his profession, he seemed quite cautious about expressing an opinion except where he had fully informed

himself. As we talked, there would come creeping into my thoughts unbidden a certain subtle feeling that he thought as he did because he wanted to. It suited his purpose, or his way of living, or for some reason he preferred to think as he did, and so he did think that way. It was an extremely handy way of fixing up one's opinions to suit one's wishes.

This man was not a doubter. That word implies perplexity, questions, a desire to know what is true. This man did not seem perplexed, had no question to ask, and was not seeking for anything. He plunged at once to the conclusion that seemed to suit his purpose or desire, and there he calmly stuck. I seem to have met quite a number of his clan. This talk about doubt, let me say frankly at once, is not meant for such as he. It is meant for those who are, as I was, *perplexed* about the reason for the great verities of life and faith, and being perplexed seek to learn at first hand for themselves the reason for things.

In contrast with that incident, many a time a young man or a young woman in college has sought an interview, and with eager face has told of the sore perplexity that has come in study, regarding some of the old sacred truths learned first at a mother's knee. And as I listened I seemed to read between the lines the story of a mental awakening, a brain bristling with interrogation points as to "the reason why," the earlier habit of thought shocked to find such questions arising

about such sacred things, but the questions insistent; withal an earnestness of purpose to find the truth that was to me fascinating. Then would follow the quiet talk together, sifting between essentials and non-essentials, bringing in fuller information sometimes, getting facts into clearer, broader perspective, and getting hold of the keynote of all such research, then a bit of soft, quiet prayer together, and then the pleasure of seeing the steadier step, the returning peace of spirit as the fellow went back to his study, and back to a life controlled by truth.

These latter were the true doubters; they were wavering in their thoughts; they questioned old opinions in the face of facts new to them; they were earnestly and actively seeking for information; they watched for every opportunity to get new light; they were not content to rest in their doubts but *were bent on finding the truth.* It is with such, and for such, that this present simple talk is intended. It is not meant for those who want to doubt. There comes a time in the life of every one who wakens up mentally, when that awakened mind asks that the great truths of life come up to the bar of his reason, and prove their right to be accepted.

To think is to doubt; that is, to be perplexed, to question, and sift into the reason for things. To think more is to doubt less. To think clearly through is to find the truth. Enough truth can always be found to *rest upon* while more is coming. The great truths that are used to shape and con-

trol the life, and bring peace to the spirit, are few and simple. One never finds all of the truth. It is one of the delights of living to be always finding more of truth. This, too, will be one of the great delights of the upper after-life. There will always be the zest of finding new treasures.

Some people never doubt because they never think. Of course, I mean, think for themselves into the reason of things. Some people never doubt, for they live in that sweet, peaceful atmosphere, made by their elders or others who have doubted, and thought, and thought through, and now rest upon the rock of found truth. Some people never doubt because they have doubted, have searched and sifted, and found enough truth to rest upon, and to control their lives. These latter are the real leaders of thought here. They are still learning, studying, questioning, but the element of perplexity has gone. They rest in what they have found, as they eagerly search for more.

Taking away a Cripple's Crutches.

There are two sorts of doubters; those that are not doubters at all but like to be so called, and then the doubters that really are doubters. To mark these real doubters off clearly the word honest should be used—honest doubters. That's a bit hard on the others, but still it seems to be the word to use because of its honesty. A true man does love to be honest. It's one of the touchstones of manhood.

The first sort is not really entitled to that good, wholesome word "doubter," but they insist upon using it, so let that go. The more accurate word to use for them is quibblers. When they search it is simply for something that will bolster up the opinion they hold. They find fault with Christianity. They pick out the flaws and faults of Christian people—and there are surely enough to pick out—and seem to take pleasure in pointing them out. They gather up the arguments and statements of others, and freely pass them out without finding if they are really trustworthy. They seem to listen to the other side only to study how to answer it.

These quibbling friends are fond of argument; that is, they are fond of that sort of argument which is a sharp crossing of swords to see which can outdo the other; the keen, sharp passage of words and measuring of statements to see which can come out ahead. Such duelling, it can be positively said, though very common, never helps and always hurts. The men who indulge in it are usually seeking to defend their own position, which often means to defend their own intellectual keenness. No earnest man in the thick of life has time for such discussion. It does but react, however unconsciously, upon a man's beliefs, and, worse yet, upon his ability to see a fact colorlessly, to weigh what comes without prejudice, and so to get the help of knowing the truth.

There is a story told of Henry Ward Beecher and a certain gentleman who was very widely

known for his eloquence and for his scepticism. It was at a social gathering of a group of brilliant, intellectual men. The sceptical man had, as was his wont, taken occasion to make ugly flings at the Christian religion in his usual keen, eloquent way. Beecher listened with the others. After a pause he broke in abruptly by telling of a scene he said he had witnessed that day on one of the streets of New York.

It was a rainy day, with the streets in bad shape. A badly crippled man was hobbling painfully along on his crutches, picking his way over the crossing of one of the busiest thoroughfares, when a strong, burly man came roughly along, and rudely ran into the cripple; the poor fellow's crutches slipped this way and that, and he fell a-sprawling in the soft slime of the street. But the strong man, instead of apologizing and helping him up, laughed coarsely at the poor fellow's plight, and kept on his way.

As Beecher told the story in his own inimitably vivid way the company present expressed their disgust with such conduct, the sceptical man heartily condemning it. Beecher looked him full in the face and said slowly, "Thou art the man: we are all crippled by sin; Christianity is helping us find our way along the road of life, even then a painful, hobbling way; you come along ruthlessly and knock out the only help we have to hold us up and steady our steps, and offer nothing better, but leave us sprawling hopelessly in the mire." With his great keen-

ness Beecher had characterized the whole class of sceptics, unbelievers, whose whole pleasure seems to be in telling what they do *not* believe, and in disturbing those who do honestly believe something.

It is not pleasant to say so, but it is very much to be feared that much so-called doubt is merely a sort of cloak for something else, and that something else a thing far worse and meaner than the doubt. The word doubt has quite an intellectual flavor. It seems to suggest mental strength. It makes a fine cloak. Its ample folds and soft gray color can cover up very much within. It is quite apt to be an intellectual covering for some very unintellectual, very common, and very coarse habits. Scratch some self-styled doubters and you will find ugly, selfish sinners. Let such friends remember and not forget that there is no necessary connection between selfishness and doubt, between sin, just common, plain sin, and intellectual diffculties.

Some Marks of Honest Doubt.

Then there is the real doubter. He is not absorbed in what he does not believe. No true doubter ever is. He is concerned about finding out what should be believed. He is digging for facts. He carries a sifter and attempts to separate the mere husks from the wheat-hearts. There is the throwing aside of much that comes of course. But this is merely incidental with the honest searcher. His eye and thought are on the kernel

of fact. No serious, thoughtful man allows himself to give his strength to declaring what he does not believe, except incidentally for an immediate purpose. He centres thought and strength on what is plainly true, on what must be believed. And as that is held sharply up to view the other falls away. The best way to get rid of error is to hold up the truth. Darkness goes when the sun rises.

The honest doubter is a wholesome man to meet. He is not trying to trip somebody up, but to get a sure footing for himself. He never attacks. He inquires. He is always seeking for light. He goes about with his eyes and ears more open than his mouth. It is opened chiefly to ask questions, real questions that seek information. He welcomes truth from any quarter, and contributions to one's stock of truth sometimes come from most unlikely quarters.

There is another sure mark of this wholesome man; he will admit himself wrong when new light shows that he is. That is always a hard thing to do, nothing is much harder. It makes a severe mental wrench many a time. It wounds one's intellectual pride very sorely. Many a man's growth is stunted and stopped at this point. For refusal to admit the light that comes has a peculiarly stupefying effect upon the mind. The honest doubter honestly admits to himself that he was wrong in his former conclusions, and then he will admit it to others. Such admission reveals the really great man. He is not half so

much concerned about whether his views have been right, as he is to get right now. And he knows that nothing clogs up the road to truth like misconceptions of truth, or positive wrong —untruths.

And then the final test of the real, true doubter is this, that as light comes he will allow it to govern his habits, his life. Here is the test that drops many a man out of the ranks. The sharp tug-of-war comes at this point. For it is an essential of finding truth that the spirit and habit of life be made to fit what is found. That may mean very radical changes. It may cost friendships, and income, and standing. But that will not deter the true man, for he is honest first of all. For mark you keenly, the great truths are the moral truths. They concern the life we are living now, and to live always. The great test of truth is its effect upon the life. Truth itself affects life. It pushes away the artificial, the false, the wrong, and, breathing as a soft warm south wind upon life, brings out its strength and fragrance.

Jesus spoke a word about this that states a great law quite apart from His immediate use of it: "He that is willing to do . . . shall know." It is a characteristic of the great truths that they attack what is contrary to themselves, what is wrong. Truth is aggressive. It points out with unflinching finger the wrong, the untrue, the false, the sin. It insists upon a man's life measuring up to its requirements. Its voice is

distinct and sharp, although most quiet. It insists on being heard. The only way to get rid of that voice is to shut up the ears. And then the poor fool of a man hasn't changed the voice nor stopped it. He has only cut himself off from hearing it; but not cut himself off from the result it is announcing to him. Truth is always asking a man *to do something.* To him who obeys it becomes an open book in big, plain type. He that is willing to do shall know. Obedience leads to a university degree in the highest knowledge. Knowledge of truth lies only along the path of obedience, with most at the farther end.

Christianity owes much to honest doubt. There was a doubter in the original group of twelve men who stood closest to Jesus. And there is pretty sure to be found one who has doubted, or who doubts, wherever twelve thoughtful men gather.

Jesus' attitude towards the first doubter is wonderfully cheering and helpful. He didn't chide nor find fault. He welcomed personal investigation. In earnest tones He said, "Reach hither thy hand; find out for yourself; know by the feel that it is I myself who was dead and now am risen."

Thomas accepted that invitation. He revealed his sincerity and earnestness. He came where he was likely to get light. He was a true doubter, honest in his perplexity, looking for light, and when it came frankly admitting that he had been wrong. To every thoughtful, honest doubter comes that same warm, eager invitation from

Jesus' lips, "Reach hither thy hand; find out for yourself." A true doubter never settles down in his doubts. He asks questions. But he asks them to get information; not to puzzle somebody else, and never for the sake of arguing, and never to prove himself right.

Much scepticism is an extreme mental protest against the extreme statements of religious teachers. One extreme always draws out an opposite extreme. Both men are extreme and therefore both in part wrong. The angle of vision is not the correct one for clear seeing. But let not the man at the sceptical extreme think to excuse his position, nor to rest in it because the other man is extreme too. A man should seek for truth, and not be held back by somebody's extreme statement of it. The earnest man does seek for truth, not that he may combat the other man in his wrong view of it, but for the sweet peace of knowing truth, and the yet sweeter peace of *living his life in its clear light.* No man is justified in staying at one extreme because somebody else is at the other. He is hindering the truth itself, and, worse, is hindering some other man who is hiding behind him.

The Best Book on Christian Evidences.

All men are controlled in their thinking either by prejudice or by conviction. Prejudice is prejudgment. It is reaching a conclusion before getting all the information there is to be gotten. Conviction is matured judgment formed after

getting and weighing carefully all available information. All men are influenced to some extent by prejudice. I suppose a really unprejudiced, unbiassed man cannot be found. There is always that in his training that influences him for or against, quite apart from his reasoning powers. There is nothing harder to overcome than prejudice, especially early prejudice, that coloring that has come through home surroundings, circumstances, schooling, companionships, and friendships. It can be overcome. Yet no task is more difficult.

I was a guest once in the home of an old family of New England stock, and from my host got this story. He was a civil engineer, a man of mature judgment, and like the old, typical New Englander gave a large place to facts, without much play to imagination. As a boy he had a boy friend who later became a lawyer, an orator, and one of the best known lecturers on infidel subjects. The father of this boy friend was pastor of one of the churches in the village. He belonged to a certain old type of ministers whose preaching was of a stern, logical, unsympathetic sort, and his home life was sadly in keeping with it. A hard, hot temper, a domineering spirit, rank selfishness, did not make a very lovable sort of man in the home. For months before this boy was born into that home his mother was in bitterness of soul. Her daily experiences led to much bitterness, rebellion, doubts of God's love, and grave doubt about the Christian faith. And

in such an atmosphere her son was conceived and born.

That was a terrible birthright for any one to overcome. Yet mark you keenly, it could have been overcome, even though its tinge might remain over all the life. Where there is the earnest, seeking spirit, any bent of early prejudice can be practically overcome, even though its finger-marks may remain.

Let it be understood at once that Christianity has counterfeits. That fact helps greatly in believing it. Could it have a greater compliment than a counterfeit? The counterfeit emphasizes the value of the real. Nobody ever tried to counterfeit a piece of common brown wrapping-paper. It is the finely engraved government bill or bank bill that is counterfeited. And let the other fact, the sad fact, be put down too, that Christianity must not be judged by some of its followers, indeed by many of its followers. It must indeed be judged by its influence upon men's lives. And from that test it has no reason to shrink, for the most enlightened nations, the strongest nations, are those that have been under Christian influence.

And there are countless instances close at hand everywhere of individual lives wholly and beautifully transformed under the influence of the Gospel of Christ; indeed *miraculously* transformed, so sharp is the change from old to new, with no explanation other than that of the power of God. One single instance of that sort is quite enough

to prove the living power of God. One Jerry McAuley or one Samuel Hadley is the best volume on Christian evidences to be found.

That there may be found many selfish, worldly Christians does but indicate how many unanchored people there are that are swept along by the tide of their times. Christianity is the popular religion of the western world. Entrance to much society is through the church door. And many who have been and are true in their attachment to it have not the strength of character to rise above the prevalent type of Christianity by which they are surrounded. Christianity has been severely wounded many times in the house of its friends. All this should make the honest doubter the more eager to get to the fountain-head of the stream. Jesus stands the test of any examination. To Him one should go who would know.

The Spirit of Search.

The searcher for the truth should mark keenly that the result of his thinking and study will depend wholly upon two things: the way he goes at it, and the reason he has for going at it at all. The way he goes at his study will very largely decide what he will get. He needs to have a candid, open spirit. He should try to be unbiassed as far as possible, neither for nor against. Indeed he must go a bit further than this; there should in fairness be a spirit of sympathy with that which he is investigating or judging.

This is the true critical spirit. The expert in sculpture in examining a bit of work seeks to discern the purpose of the chiselling artist. He tries to put himself at one in spirit with the workman, so as to see the thing from his standpoint and judge accordingly as to the success and skill shown. He may find faults and lack of skill and finish, crudeness of conception and of workmanship, but he approaches his criticism from the artist's standpoint.

The same is true of all proper criticism, whether of a painting, of a book, or of a piece of art needlework. The critic approaches not to quibble nor find fault but to get in touch with the artist's conception and ideal and then judge of his work. This must be the spirit here. One should be not disposed favorably nor unfavorably, but seeking to put himself in warm, sympathetic touch with the subject and its ideals to judge accordingly. Now I do not suppose that anyone ever filled out fully such requirements, but if he faithfully, honestly tries to he will get just that much nearer to the truth.

Then the reason why a man goes at such study will determine largely what he will get. And there is just the one great purpose worth while, and that is to have the life made true and strong and beautiful. Life is too serious for one to be satisfied with less than this, or to spend time for a less high ambition. There is satisfaction in getting to understand truth and the reason of things, a *mental* satisfaction, but this is incidental. The

great, throbbing passion of a true man is to have his life true and pure, strong and fragrant. To know more than we weave into the daily fibre of life is to add to our own self-reproach in the coming days. It does but brew a bitterer drink for the later years' drinking.

But if a man ring true here, if there be the simple strong purpose to put every truth to the test of living, *and* to test the life mercilessly by whatever truth comes, and hold it up to that standard, then—let me say it very deliberately—that man may throw away all his old teachings, his mother's Bible and all that goes with it, if he can trust himself to hold steady to this purpose as he examines what comes up.

Our searching friend can go a step further yet. Let him begin by believing nothing. But let him *suppose there is a God.* And all the innermost, deepest yearnings of his soul within and all the marvels of the universe without make that a very easy and natural supposition. The simplest philosophy would argue that there is no power apart from personality. Power may be plainly seen and felt without the personality behind it being seen. But in all the world of research, so far as men have been able to sift through to the very bottom, there never yet has been found power of any sort without a person being behind it somewhere. And all around us in life, in nature, is tremendous, immeasurable, incalculable power being seen. So that from the inner yearnings, the swing of the worlds, the workings of nature,

it is easy and natural and philosophical to suppose a marvellous being back of all that we see and feel.

Suppose then there be a God. What sort of a God would we prefer Him to be? Well, at least five things can be said of the God we would prefer to have: He would be pure, and powerful; He would be just, and loving; He would have a plan for His creation and for my life. How would such a God feel towards the men He had made? He would surely want to communicate with them, and tell His plan, and take great pleasure in their affairs, and in their realizing in their lives His plan for them.

Well, here is a Book that is distinct from all other books, that from end to end claims to contain just such a communication. And here is a Man, the central figure of this Book, before whom all men have instinctively bowed in reverence, who said that He came from God for the one purpose of letting men know about God. This clears the ground for the man who wants to know for himself. He will set himself to examining this Book, and this Man.

As he takes up the Book how shall he feel towards such a God as there may be? What should his attitude be towards Him? It would surely be one of reverence, loving reverence, of intense desire to be like Him, and to have His plan of one's life made fully real. And more, there would be an intense longing that He would reveal things personally. In such search I would naturally

want to communicate with Him and ask Him to reveal Himself to me, and help me to come into such contact with Him that I could receive His revelation of Himself.

But how can I communicate with Him? Well, how do I communicate with others? In two ways: by words telling what is in my mind, *and without words.* I look in the face of my familiar friend, with whose spirit I am in full sympathy, and I know very often the thoughts of his mind before he utters them. I can glance at my wife in a group of friends and let her know without speaking a word what I am thinking and get her answer. We are all constantly communicating with each other without using words. We are revealing our inner thoughts to others in words, and without words.

Then we are getting accustomed to distant communication without any material thing, even such as a wire, to connect the two talking. There is a certain sympathetic contact expressed through mechanical contrivances that are in touch. Persons completely out of sight of each other, with miles between separating them, can intelligently communicate and exchange their thoughts with each other without any material connection between them. So we have grown accustomed to communicate with those we cannot see, and to receive replies.

With such a God and such men desiring to know Him, it would be quite natural for them to speak to Him in words, and to speak when no

words can express the thoughts; and, more, to be conscious of His sympathetic response. The common word for this sort of thing is prayer. With this to be said, that very many who pray have not become skilled in receiving the sympathetic responses.

It would be natural therefore in beginning the examination of this Book, and this Man, to bow in reverence, and ask such a God as there may be to reveal Himself and His truth, and all the study and thinking would naturally be done in this reverential, prayerful spirit.

A word of caution should be put in here. There is a very common tendency with all of us to get to a conclusion too quickly. We are all apt to form judgments before all the facts attainable are in. The common fever of life affects us here as elsewhere. We are quite apt to make up our opinions too quickly, without a broad enough outlook on the facts, and without weighing each fact duly. Facts are like men, their true worth cannot be told by counting; they must be weighed. And weighing always takes more time. It is easy to keep tab on the statements that come along; but to sift them thoroughly so that the non-essentials fall away, and leave the essential element standing alone, takes more time; indeed more time than many seem disposed to give. And then to put the essential element, this real nut-heart of truth, into the scale and hold steady and quiet enough, so the scale can balance accurately—that takes time and steadiness of temper.

And it takes isolation too. There is so much jarring of trains overhead, and electric cars on the level, and tunnelling beneath the surface, that a man has to get insulated and isolated so as to get quiet enough to keep the balances within himself steady. Yet all this is itself an immense advantage, for it tends to increase the inner quiet, which is man's true spirit.

The Book.

In such a spirit, and for such a purpose, let a man begin reading this Book through. Let him read it just as he would any other book so far as his mental processes are concerned, thoughtfully *and clear through*, reserving his conclusion, as of course he will, until he is through. He may find much that does not seem clear. He may find what seem to be inconsistencies or inaccuracies. Let him note these mentally, but hold them strictly in abeyance, for he is aiming to get the spirit and swing of the Book clear through. Repeated readings have been found to clear up many matters that seemed puzzling at first, and some never are cleared up. But those, it is to be noted, never affect the main purpose of the Book.

There are certain things to be noted about the Book. It has had a strange history. Indeed, in the strangeness of its history it is apart from all other books of any nation or people. It has been printed in greater numbers by far than any other book, and in many more languages. More

scholarly men of acute mind have given their time and lives to its study and explanation than to any other. It has been and still is the most studied, the most read, the best loved, and the worst hated of any book. It has been a veritable storm centre, and also, in sharp contrast with that phrase, a veritable haven of rest. Thousands of men have stormed over its contents, and hundreds of thousands have found in its pages that which spoke sweetest peace to their spirits, and held them steady in life's roughest storms.

It has had a strange vitality, outliving all sorts of enmity. Men used to burn it up in their efforts to get rid of it. Of late years they have taken to cutting it up with keen fingers and sharp-edged knives. But it seems to survive either process about equally well, and is to-day being printed in larger numbers than ever, scattered more widely, studied more thoroughly and keenly, and apparently loved more devoutly. No intelligent man can afford to be ignorant of a book with such a record.

The Book itself is found to contain as many as sixty-six distinct books, written by many writers, at least as many as forty. These men writing it are from all classes of society. Some have had the best learning and culture of their times and of the world; others seem to have had practically no such advantages. They wrote in many different places, as far apart in extremes as Rome in Europe and Babylon in Asia. The period of writing runs through as much as sixteen hundred

years. So that it is not like most books, in being written by one man. It is a collection of books by many men, of different sorts, written under all sorts of conditions and circumstances, in many different countries, running through a very long period of time.

Now please note what is the most noteworthy thing of all this Book, its subject. It is about *religion.* There is no one subject on which men have talked so much and about which they have differed so radically and so violently as the subject of religion. The greatest hatreds of the race have been about religion. The worst cruelties have been practised in religion's name and for its sake. Wherever men gather in groups large or small they will sooner or later get to talking about two subjects, and differ with each other on each. It may be in the logging-camp, or about the miner's common fire, on the upper deck or in the steerage of a steamer, in social circles or university circles, in the commercial club or in the slums. Let men talk freely together and two subjects crop out, religion and politics; the relation of man to God and his relation to his fellow. And invariably they differ, politely, gently, intensely, abruptly, stormily, according to the sort of men, but always differ.

Now this Book, or collection of small books, from so many different men, so different in every way, is about this stormy, divisive subject of religion. Yet there is here an essential agreement. There is a practical unity of thought and ideal

and purpose throughout from end to end. This is one of the first things that strikes one most forcibly in examining this book. And finding it intensifies one's interest greatly and sets his appetite on edge as he goes at it farther.

There is a second thing to note. This Book is a sort of mother of books. It has given birth to great numbers of books, on all phases of life on which books are written. It seems to have had a peculiar power of stimulating thought. There is here a vitality that has been felt in every department of writing and research. And more, all the lines of study to which men have devoted their strength seem to run their roots down into this Book, and to draw a certain element of life from it. Here in the Book is the oldest history, hoary with age; and here in the scholarly world are books written by strong men who have spent money and time and talent in digging up the old records out of the earth, and verifying these simple statements of the old Book. Here in the Book is a system of political economy, or at least the principles of that science; and here in the college libraries and halls are hundreds of books on that subject which work out and amplify the principles found here. Students of the perplexing land question will find a simple solution proposed here; though it is not a solution that ambitious men with selfish desires are very likely to adopt for their own holdings.

The laws of Moses have come to be the fountain of all modern as well as earlier jurisprudence.

Behind Blackstone and Coke and other great legal authorities is Moses. They build upon his foundations. The strongest nations of to-day have the primary principles of the Mosaic code interwoven inextricably into their common law, and so into their life.

A former United States Senator from one of the northwestern States, noted for his strength as a legal advocate, has told the story of his early ambition to be a lawyer. As a youth he had gone tremblingly to a famous lawyer and made application to read law in his office. To his utter astonishment the lawyer said brusquely, "Can you recite the Bible through, sir?" The young man managed to stammer out his astonished "No." "Well," the old judge said shortly, "go and memorize the Bible and then you may come and read law here." And out the youth went in an utter daze, wondering what the Bible had to do with reading law. But the coveted permission depended upon that, so he set to work and did commit great portions of the Book. He became famous as a lawyer both within and beyond the bounds of his own State, and frequently said he realized in the after-years what a foundation for his legal knowledge and practice was laid in that early biblical study.

The best books on moral philosophy, on sanitation and personal health, on shrewd business ethics, draw their inspiration from the principles first found here. Its language and imagery honeycomb the finest literature of the English

tongue. If one were to cut out of Shakespeare and Tennyson and the other great English poets all allusions taken from this Book, scarcely a page of their writings would escape the scissors.

When Benjamin Franklin was ambassador at the French court he was one of a circle of scholarly men who met frequently to discuss literary matters. It was their custom to bring to the gatherings choice, rare bits of literature to be read and discussed. It was a time when scepticism was rampant and the Bible a hated book. One day Franklin said: "Gentlemen, I have found a rare gem of literary beauty, which I have brought to read to you." They listened keenly as he read through the little book of Ruth, making slight changes that its Biblical identity might not be suspected. As he finished they were all enthusiastic in praise of its simple beauty, and inquired eagerly where he had found such a choice gem. He dryly said he had found it in a book called the Bible.

There is one feature of this Book that is most peculiar, and that is its scientific accuracy. It is not written, of course, in any part from a scientific standpoint. Its language is never scientific, but is just the simple language of the common people. But it always *fits in* with well-attested scientific facts. There is no jarring, no slips, no glaring breaks, no language ever used that does not fit in with the matured statements of science. When we recall the statement commonly made that any technical book as much as

ten years old must be thrown aside as worthless, because of the constant change in the state of knowledge, one begins to realize and appreciate what a tremendous peculiarity this is.

But the main thing that gets hold of a man reading thoughtfully here, and then grips him hard and holds him in its tight grip, is the *ideals* of the Book, wonderful high moral ideals such as he finds nowhere else. Its conception of God, of the worth and nobility of man, its insistent ideals of right, and of love as the standard in life, are such as can be found nowhere else. They are such as to swing the earnest man, eager for a pure, strong life, clear off his feet.

And these ideals are held to strenuously in the midst of the world's worst sin. Its exposure of sin, of insincerity, and selfishness in all phases and forms is terrific, and its hatred of them more intensely terrific still. Its heroes are praised, but always with the plainest unvarnished dealings with their faults and weaknesses.

The Man.

But the great fact of the Book is a personality that looms up large through all of its pages. From beginning to end there is one striking personality dominant. All through the older portion He is coming. Men fail, the best men with the best training fail, the kingdoms fall, *the* kingdom and people about whom the Book is woven fail most miserably, but there is some One coming who will fill out the highest expecta-

tions. In the Gospels He has come; in the later books all thought is utterly absorbed in Him; in the last book, the climax, His coming glory floods the pages. He is the heart of the Book.

Let me gather up a few facts about this Man. I will pack them into small compass that they may be grasped together. He was born in obscurity and in poverty, cradled in a stable, brought up in a country village whose good moral character was seriously questioned, had no contact with the schools of His time, being home trained, never travelled outside of a bit of territory about seventy by one hundred miles, was born of a people peculiarly exclusive and intense, had access to no literature except the very limited literature of His peculiarly seclusive people. Yet He developed a character singularly perfect.

There was in Him the utter absence of evil, and the presence of all known good. He was sterner than the sternest man in denouncing wrong, and tenderer than the tenderest woman in ministering to others. He never uttered an apology. In that He stands alone of all men of whom we have any record. He said He was without sin, and by consent of His enemies, including the man who betrayed Him and the man who condemned Him, as well as those who knew Him most intimately, He was without fault. His life for those few years of public work was literally spent out in glad, tireless service of the most practical sort for those around. He gave Himself to the needs of needy men with an utter self-

forgetting abandon. Night and day, ceaselessly, tirelessly, He ministered to men, feeding the hungry, healing the sick, relieving the distressed and demonized, and even raising the dead; while He had at times no time so much as to eat, no home to call His own, and no funds upon which to draw, being ministered to in personal needs by friends.

His teachings are marked by an originality, a sweep of conception, and a freshness never approached before nor since, and wholly at variance with His human origin and His surroundings. They have become and are to-day the accepted standard for purity of conception, high ideals of life, boldness of originality, stupendousness of sweep, and simplicity of expression.

And then will you please mark keenly His method of influencing men? The world's greatest leaders and conquerors have been soldiers. Alexander, Julius Cæsar, and Napoleon ruled by force, their great personality and power finding expression at the sword's point. Others have swayed men by the books they wrote. Jesus influenced men by the power of His teaching, of His thought, but far more by the strangely simple power of His life, by the touch of His personality alone.

The extent of his influence is startling even to this day, though so familiar. He lived for only thirty-three years. His public career was but for a tenth as long a time, only about three years and a bit more. He was put to death ignominiously and cruelly, and laid away in a tomb. He left no

book behind, and formed no organization, only a little handful of eleven unschooled peasants whom He had associated closely with Himself in His life and work. Yet within three centuries He had changed the Roman calendar, which was practically the world's calendar. To-day the world's calendars with small exception swing about the pivot of His birth. All events of history are located by their relation to Him, their occurrence "before Christ" or in a given "year of our Lord." The nations that call themselves by His name are the dominant nations of the earth. The life of the whole world has known a new life dating from His coming. His conception of life, personal life and social life, is regarded throughout the world as the highest. To-day more than ever He is dominant in the life of the earth. Of Him the old German, Jean Paul Frederick Richter, said in words that have grown very familiar, quoting freely, that "He, being the mightiest among the holy, and the holiest among the mighty, lifted with His pierced hands the gates of empires off their hinges, turned the streams of centuries out of their channels, and to-day rules the world."

Now please mark with keenest thought what this man Jesus said about Himself. This is the most critical part of all to study regarding Him. He claimed to be the Son of God in a sense that nobody else was; before His earthly life He had been with God in closest intimacy, known only by Himself; He had come down to the earth to tell men about God; when His errand to the earth

was done He would go back again to be with His Father, as He had been from before the beginning of time. Let the thoughtful man note very sharply that this is the claim Jesus made, and insistently made for Himself in the face of bitterest opposition.

Such a claim clearly stamps its maker as one of three sorts of men. Either He was a fanatic, self-deluded with regard to Himself; or else He was not a good man, but purposely said what He knew to be not so; or else—He was what He claimed to be. The purity of His life, unapproached by any other man, together with His constant, tireless, self-sacrificing service on behalf of others, clearly rules out the supposition that He was not good. And all men have agreed in His goodness.

That He was a fanatic, self-deceived with regard to Himself, swept off His mental balance by the high fervor of His spirit and hot rush of His enthusiasm, would seem the much likelier supposition of these two. Yet the wisdom of His teachings, equalled by none other, recognized and acknowledged freely by all; His rare mental calmness and poise under all circumstances, including the most trying; and the remarkable clearness and sanity of His judgment effectually dispose of this supposition.

It has been freely said, of late especially, that these followers of His, whose accounts make up the Gospel records, in their enthusiastic loyalty to Him, claim more for Him in their writing than He actually claimed for Himself. Yet be it

keenly marked there, that it was this claim of His that led to the bitterness of the enmity against Him, and to its final ending in His being put to death. And further, these records are our only source of original information about Jesus and the stupendousness of His character. The unrivalled place He occupies in history and in all the race of men agrees fully with the claim put forth for Him in these four small books.

Now if these two suppositions be shut out there is left only this, the most stupendous of the three, that Jesus actually was what He claimed to be. And the severest criticism that can be made of our scholarly sceptical friends comes in just here. They agree about His life, its pure, positive goodness; His teachings, their unapproached and unapproachable wisdom; the rare sanity of His judgment, and the sublimity of His conceptions. The sceptics of sceptical France, the rationalists of rationalistic Germany, the worldly men of all the world, all practically agree here. Yet they have not accepted what He Himself believed about Himself. Surely if what they do believe about Him is true, it is altogether logical to go on, and believe what He Himself believed about Himself.

The Call of the Christ.

Now please note very keenly what it was upon which Jesus laid the chief emphasis regarding Himself—it was upon His *death.* From His own point of view the climax of His life was His death. That last year He continually referred to it, and

to its meaning for men. As the shadows of death darkened down about Him, and its chill waters deepened in their nearness, He asked that all who loved Him would remember His death. The Church has never forgotten that request of the last night. However at times the emphasis of her teachers may have swung away from it, the simple memorial meal from the Master's own hands has brought out constantly into boldest relief His great death. Every week untold thousands of many creeds and tongues and shadings of belief reverently bow in the presence of the simple bread and wine, and remember that Jesus died.

The chief personality of this Book, and of all history, is this Man. The chief event of this Man's life, in His own thought of it, was His death. He declared that for a specific purpose He deliberately yielded to death. The whole presumption is in favor of our believing that if He had not yielded Himself voluntarily up to His enemies He would never have died. He would never even have known any of the common weakness of increasing years; only a full maturing of His powers. For the element of sin which works weakness and death was lacking in Him.

This puts sharper emphasis yet upon the significance of His purpose in consenting to death. No fact stands out more plainly in the Gospel stories than this, that He yielded to death of His own accord for a great purpose. The time of His death, the fact of it, the manner of it, were con-

trolled by the way in which He repeatedly avoided His enemies until He chose to yield to their will.

What was the purpose of His death? His point of view in yielding to it may be put simply in this way: all men have sinned; the natural, logical result of sin is death; it grieved the Father much that man had gotten into such a bad fix; out of love the Father sent Him down, and He came down to die that so man might be saved from dying. Any man and every man who is willing may accept Jesus' death as his own, and instead of his own. Whoever does can so be free from sin's power to work death in him.

But there is more than this in Jesus' understanding of the matter. He did more than die. He lived a pure, sinless life before His death, and He lived a new kind of life after His death. He said He would send down the Holy Spirit to live in each man who was willing. That Spirit would burn out the bad, make a man hate sin, and give power to resist sin. He would work out within a man the pure life of Jesus, and more, the new kind of life that Jesus lived after His death—a life lived on the earth but not subject to its power, controlled from above. This new life would be lived in part only, for there was no promise of bodily death being removed; but in a coming day it also was to be gone and that new kind of life lived fully. This was Jesus' point of view, and His purpose in yielding to death.

There is a response to this in human *experience* that is remarkable. There is that within a man's

need that answers to this plan of Jesus. It is very common to-day, in some quarters, to find great emphasis laid upon the example of Jesus, and little or none upon His death. Let our friend who exploits the example of Jesus as the chief thing in His wonderful life, ignoring the sacrificial element in His death, let him try honestly to follow that great example fully, with no apologies for his own weakness. And if he is frank and honest he will be compelled to admit that it takes more than example to change a man. There needs to be a very positive power put into a man by some One else. It must be a power with the force of moral dynamite, if some things such as impurity and selfishness are to be put out, and kept out, and certain other things such as purity and strength and sweet, strong unselfishness to be put in.

Jesus asked that He might be accepted as man's *Saviour*, a Saviour from the result of sin, and from its great power. This was His earnest appeal to men when down here among us. It is *the* thrilling appeal of these four simple Gospels to every man. It is to-day the eager cry of Jesus' heart to each of us. A man in earnest can easily believe enough to respond with his whole life to that cry. It means a new life, with new motives, *and*, infinitely more, *new power*. And as a man quietly, resolutely steps into this path, new light begins to break in from the east, and then more, and yet more, until some day, it is promised, there will be the full shining of the sun.

THE PROBLEM OF AMBITION,

OR

WHAT IS BEST WORTH WHILE

THE WORLD'S UNDER-MASTER.

GOD NEEDS MEN.

THE BROODING NEED.

"FORGETTING, I PRESS FORWARD."

A DOUBLE TRINITY.

A HIGH AIM.

A STRANGE COAT-OF-ARMS.

A HIGHER AIM

THE MAN WAITING TO GO ALONG.

The Problem of Ambition

The World's Under-Master.

If a man is climbing a mountain he needs some road marks, or an object to guide by, else he will not get anywhere. He may enjoy the climb, and get some pretty glimpses of scenery, but he never reaches the top, and is apt to lose his way. If he is in a large crowd he needs to have some definite aim or he will lose himself in the crowd, and come to the end of the day tired out and with nothing done. If he is crossing the sea, or the desert, he needs a compass to guide by, or he is likely to lose his life.

And if he is simply trying to make his life count for what it was intended to, he needs something to guide by. For sometimes the path is hidden and overgrown. And ofttimes there is the confusion of a big crowd, with shuffling feet making both dust and noise. And many times the path seems as difficult to find as on the pathless sea or desert. And a good many seem to go astray and spend the day of life on the less important things, and then towards its twilight, feel sharp twinges of regret. So that we want to talk together quietly a bit about the North Star of life,

the compass, the true road-marks, that we may aim straight, and travel steady, and reach the top.

There are three great forces in the world of matter, fire and wind and water. And the greatest of these is fire. There are two great forces in the world of men, organization and the individual; a group of men acting together and the man himself in the group; and the greater of these is the individual, the man. The organization is dependent upon the men composing it, and even more upon the man who is the leader. It is limited to the things upon which these men can agree. The more men there are, the fewer the things on which they will agree. The organization is a composite, not of the men, but of so much of them as can get together in agreement on a particular subject. By far the greater of the two is the man.

The world of matter belongs under man's thumb. It was given to him to subdue and develop and control. The greatest force in the world of matter and of man is a man. The greatest factor in human life is a man, with clear brain and of fine grain, with clear light in his eye, and the hue of health on his cheek, with poised judgment and rugged will, with sweet spirit and pure heart.

Every great movement in history has revolved about a man as its pivot, or found embodiment in him. To recall the great invasion of southern Europe by the hordes of northern barbarians is

to think of Alaric, the foremost of all their leaders, sacking the world's capital. To think of the second most stupendous movement among the peoples of the earth, the Reformation, is to see Luther, the greatest of its leaders. The French Revolution found its embodiment in Mirabeau. To speak of law and legal codes is to call up Moses, chiefest of all; and of autocratic government, Julius Cæsar, whose name still survives in the titles of the Russian Czar and the German Kaiser.

God Needs Men.

When God would do anything among men He chooses and uses a man. When He wanted to grow a nation that would stand for the highest ideals of revealed religion, even as later Greece stood for letters, and Rome for the power of organization, He chose a man up in the Euphrates Valley. And about this man, Abraham, He began slowly to build up that strange people which has had the greatest influence of any upon the nations of the earth. When that nation, not yet fully born as a nation, was in sore danger of being throttled in its birth, He took a man, Moses, chosen from his birth, graduate in the highest learning of earth's best schools, with a postgraduate degree from the University of Arabia, and who has left the indelible marks of his native gifts and special training upon that people, and upon the life of the whole race.

With deepest reverence be it said, when God

would redeem a world He sent a Man. That Man was as truly a man as though not infinitely more. Yet His character clearly marks Him off from all other men. When He would awaken the life of the whole earth by awakening its head, He chose a man, Luther. One cannot think of that vast moral and mental upheaval of Europe which took so long to reach its flood tide without having his vision filled with the figure of the German giant, and about him grouped, through the years of that movement of staggering, regenerating power, such men as scholarly Wycliff in England, brave Huss in Bohemia, eloquent Savonarola in Italy, the keen and logical statesman Calvin in Geneva, and rugged Knox in Scotland.

When He would build up a new nation on the westernmost continent to stand for liberty, He chose the stalwart Virginian, Washington. And when that nation itself was to be taught liberty, and held together in its hour of severest testing as a nation, He chose the English giant of Kentucky and Illinois, Lincoln. And later yet, when He would teach the privileges of liberty to those whose only birthright was slavery, He chose a black Washington for the rare, difficult task.

But one must never let the leaders make him forget the faithful common folk without whom no leader could do his work. The common everyday life, not told by the history writer, is dependent even more upon the individual man, whether it be the manning of the ship, or the running of

the railroad, or the weaving of life's common web anywhere. Success and happiness depend upon the one man, in the thick of things, quietly doing the commonplace things, with an uncommon, faithful steadiness.

The Brooding Need.

The greatest need of the world is *men.* The spirit of organization which has seized hold of present-day life and specialized it so highly in every direction makes that need greater to-day than ever. The organization is no stronger morally than the man in control. It is no stronger in ability than the men who serve it. And one never knows upon what one man the whole intricate machinery may depend and revolve. The world needs men to-day as never before. There are movements for higher ideals in national affairs waiting for men to lead them.

There are great movements in the people's religious life waiting for the men who can embody them, and teach, and lead. And the need always finds the man. There is a law of affinity that brings them together. The need brooding over the face of the people seems to bring forth the man imbued with its own spirit, to be its champion, though the higher in the scale of life, the longer time does it take for the maturity that finds a perfect birth; man takes longest of any of the animal creation, finer grained men still longer, and leaders longest yet. The need disregards all questions of birth and blood, training of the

schools and social surroundings, so dear to human hearts, and by an unerring intuition goes straight to its man, and patiently waits till he be full ready.

"*Forgetting, I Press Forward.*"

But that word "man" seems to have more than one meaning. There is a cheaper use of it for the male of the human race, with the usual supply of organs, and the usual stock of limbs to walk and work with, but with no high controlling aim. And then there is the nobler use of it for that fine spirit, of either sex, which sees the high aim of life, and bends every bit of strength steadily towards reaching it.

I want to have the boldness to talk a bit about a man, the *ideal* man. In a day when the practical is seizing the lines and driving hard that word ideal is misunderstood and abused. There is nothing so really practical as the truly ideal. Ideal does not mean visionary in the weak sense. It means aiming high; no, it means aiming highest. It has not gotten up there, but it is reaching, stretching up. It is dissatisfied with anything a whit less than the highest level. Its favorite motto is "Forgetting, I press forward." Forgetting the things behind, I press toward the mark.

The victories are forgotten in the eager reach for greater. The temptations and falls and failures are forgotten except as warnings in the onward push. The ideal man is he who has a vision of the mountain top, and is sweetly, earnestly,

untiringly, unflinchingly making every bit of strength and time and every circumstance bend towards reaching it. And who resolutely pushes aside everything that would hinder or not help.

We want in our talk to-day to get a bit, a good clear bit, of a vision of that mountain top, to reach which is the thing best and most worth while. It will only be a bit, though, at best. For every man must see his own vision. And the vision increases in size and clearness as one climbs. The man we are talking about just now is a trinity. There are three of him tied up together. The three are in a scale ascending from lowest to highest. At the lowest there is a body; yet though lowest it is never low; at the lowest it is high. The lowest rung of this ladder is high.

A step up is the mind. Every man has a mind, though quite a number do not seem to have suspected that fact. It is peculiar in its make-up; there is a cold-storage room for facts; a photographer's highly sensitized plate for receiving impressions of all that comes; and a judge sitting above all to weigh and sift and give decisions and guide all below. And highest of all is the spirit which lives in the body, thinks through the mind, and holds the sceptre of the life.

The true man aims steadily to have a trained body, its powers matured or rather maturing, disciplined to obey and under full control. It is to be kept steadily in its place of a faithful servant. That is a very high place, to serve faithfully the purpose intended. He does not cod-

dle his body, nor abuse it; he is not heedless of its requirements; and, above all, he is not ignorant of its nature and needs, and does not allow it to reverse the true order and become master. This man has not attained, but he is reaching, and this is his aim.

A Double Trinity.

On the next higher level is another trinity, a trinity within a trinity, for the mind is that. Through the five in-gates of eye and ear, taste and touch and smell, come in the impressions, the information, the facts that are put away. The intellect is the mind's cold storage for gathering and holding all that comes. It should be kept clear, cool, and calm, ever alertly listening, keen for facts, gathering, weighing, sifting, sorting and pigeonholing them for use.

Then there is the power to feel, the faculty that is impressed by all that comes, and that gives expression to what is felt, the emotional nature. It should be kept soft so as to record quickly and accurately all that comes in. It properly is susceptible, plastic; on the one hand not stupid, nor on the other overexcited or stale. There is perhaps less training of this faculty, except narrowly in strictly professional studies, as music or art or medical skill, than of either of the other two powers of the mind. It should not be repressed, and should not be dominant. Yet to either one of those extremes does the pendulum usually swing.

There is a tendency among men to repress the feelings, especially the finer feelings. There is a tendency among women to yield unduly to the feelings and allow them to rule. Both are extremes to be carefully avoided. A tear may be as manly as rugged strength. And repressed emotion may be as womanly as the finer fibre of woman's strength. The tears that stand simply for an emotion spending itself out are hurtful; they do but wear away the strength to help that somebody needs. The tears that tell of a motive touched and stirred into action in behalf of that which called them forth are beauteous with rainbow light.

The duty of the feelings is to note accurately all that comes in and report fully to the will above. One should aim to discipline his emotional nature that it may serve him fully. The man one should be has not reached his aim here, but he is steadily stretching up towards it.

Combined with these is the third and highest member of the mental trinity, the will. The will is the king here; the judge on the highest bench from which no appeal may be taken. It is the autocrat on the throne, with no constitution to limit its sway. There are various words used for the will: *purpose* is the aim or direction of the will; *determination* is the quality of the will, telling how much or how little the purpose may be depended upon; *force* is the driving power of the will, telling how much pressure or how little may be brought into play in getting the will's will done.

The man who would be true to his being keeps all the avenues of approach open to receive all there is, his intellect quietly and steadily at its work, the feelings sensitive but well in hand, the will listening to its servants and ruling fairly over all with a gentle but very firm hand.

Then distinctly above both of these is the spirit, the living spirit who resides within this organism of body and mind, animating and dominating all the powers below, and all the life.

Such a man is ambitious, in the true sense of that great word. He is reaching steadily towards the highest levels. Ambition is healthful. I do not mean the feverish, envy-eaten, itching something commonly called by that name, but the simple absorbing desire to attain the highest.

A High Aim.

What is the highest ambition that such an earnest man may attain to? I do not say a high ambition, but the highest. There are many high targets at which men aim. But he is in a bad way who is aiming lower than the highest. And the highest includes all on the way up. These less-high things are added to the man seekting the highest. In all fairness the highest must be one that is open to all men, and possible to all. Leaving untouched many low, ignoble answers, there are among men four distinct standards of highest ambition.

There are many who believe that *to know* is the highest achievement. Their number in-

cludes great, worthy names, and many more equally worthy though unnamed by the crowd. And to know is a great aim. Without doubt knowledge is power. It has literally revolutionized all thought, and all methods of living. It has led to the saving of numberless lives, and made the saved lives happier too.

It is good to know, and to know what you know, and, modestly, to know that you know what you know, and that you do not know what you do not know. The old philosopher of Greece declared this to be the true knowledge. But the man who sets this before him as the chief ambition has a keen disappointment ahead. For the more you know the less you know; that is, the more you know of that you do not know. The wider the circle of knowledge, the broader is the sweep of ignorance. The higher the hill of knowledge you climb, the farther views you get of what you do not know. Knowing is largely a means of discovering the greatness of one's ignorance. If a man set this before himself as the highest aim he is doomed to bitterest disappointment.

There are those who would take books and manuscripts and like means of research, and, in imitation of the old Hebrews, make a calf of them—shall I say a *papier-mâché* calf?—and say: "These be thy gods that shall lead out of every Egypt of slavery, up into the promised land." This is a comparatively small, but very select, company of choice spirits.

This ambition is open to the very small number

Even in our own land, where the public school is so blessedly common, and colleges large and small of all grades are so plentiful, these are practically, with the exception of the lower school grades, for the few. Only a small proportion of all public-school pupils get as far as the high-school grade, a yet smaller number go to college, and many of these do not complete the course.

The world never knew so much, so many different things as to-day, and never was more ignorant, profoundly ignorant; that is, ignorant in the ignorance of the great masses of men, and ignoant too of the simplest knowledge of true living. It is good to know, and to know the most and best, and to know thoroughly what is known, but plainly knowledge is simply a road through to something higher up. It is not a goal in itself.

A Strange Coat-of-arms.

Then there is a great company whom nobody ever yet has numbered, of every nation and neighborhood, who plainly believe that to *have*, to possess, is the chiefest thing in life. The taint of this infection seems to have gone into all circles. Nothing escapes its unhallowed itch. It has become an epidemic in our own country. The old Hebrews had but one calf. Americans are more prodigal with their calves than that. We have two at least, the paper calf already spoken of and the golden; though the golden can no longer be properly spoken of as a calf. It is a

matured bull, but not of the polled type; it has full-grown horns.

Money is extremely handy stuff and extremely dangerous stuff too. How rare the wisdom that reckons it at its full value—and a great, untellable value that is—but keeps it strictly as a servant under the strong thumb of a high purpose. In the partnership of a pure, holy purpose it seems almost omnipotent. But when it is allowed to grip both lines and whip, it drives a man such a pace as to use up all his strength, and leave him utterly winded for anything else.

Though the world has a larger supply of gold than ever before, the vast majority of men are poor, strugglingly, pitiably poor. While there never was as good an opportunity as to-day for frugal, steady men to get enough and to spare, the crowd remains needy. And gold in itself is apt both to be and to bring a curse. It is good to have, and to have the most that may be gotten honestly, and unselfishly, and without the fever of it getting into the blood. Its possession increases the possible power of a man enormously.

Yet if getting and having were the highest achievement it would mean that man's highest estate is to be a safety-deposit vault. The correct coat-of-arms would be a clutching hand. The man develops into a tightly shut fist. The life becomes a gold-plated death. The yellow fever germ of the bank vault is sadly infecting many a noble life to-day. It is good to have for our needs, and for the world's need, but having

is simply a pathway through to something higher. It is not the highest ambition of life.

A Higher Aim.

Then there is a standard above these, much above; the standard of *doing*. There is a splendid company of those who believe that to do something is the highest ambition possible to man. These are eager to do the notable thing. They would be spoken of as having made a mark. Their names become known and are pronounced with a touch of awe sometimes. This is a distinct step up. It is good to know and to have; it is better to do. Achievement can transfigure both knowledge and gold with rare beauty. It can harness them for the world's good. When gold is at the command of hands outreaching in eager service it is fulfilling its highest mission.

The gray matter of the brain is greatest when it is tingling at the warm finger-tips of helpful service. The man who knows a great deal but does not make use of it is like one worth a million dollars—all in big copper cents; it is not available for use in that shape. The man who is busy getting money primarily for himself, not for use among others, is like the Dead Sea. It lies at the deepest depression of the earth's surface; he lies at the deepest depression below the surface of his fellows' needs. The man who is bent upon achievement, the doing of some notable, worthy thing, is aiming higher but not highest.

To do something notable is not the highest

ambition of life. And yet more thoughtfully be it said that service is not the highest achievement. Wherever there is a God-touched life there will be service, warm, whole-hearted, untiring service; yet it will be the outflow of something deeper in and deeper down than itself. The man who aims at doing as the chief achievement of his life, without a deeper driving-power, will come to the end when things clear up, hungry and tired, and both dissatisfied and unsatisfied.

It is good to know, and to have. It is better to do; to do the thing best worth while, to do the most and the best; yet the highest ambition is not found here. It is but a roadway through to somewhere else, a high roadway and noble, yet only a roadway farther on and higher up.

The Man Waiting to Go Along.

It is good to know; it is better to do; it is best to *be.* To be pure and strong, to be honest and earnest, to be kindly and thoughtful, and in all to be true, to be manly and womanly and Christly —this is the greatest ambition of life. It is not in knowing or having or doing, but *through* knowing and having and doing the best, it is in *being*, in what a man is in himself. He can do most for others who has done most with himself. Mastery of circumstances comes only through mastery of self.

The highest sphere of action is within. The little Corsican Emperor of the French could win great victories on the battlefield, but he could

not overcome the horribly selfish ambitions, hungrily eating the heart out of his human spirit. The man of Tarsus and Antioch had as intense an ambition, as great a grasp, and as strong a will, but his chief ambition was to be well-pleasing to his Master, his grasp was upon his own nature to bring it into subjection, and his will drove him over the world, that all men might know the same blessed self-mastery through Jesus.

He is aiming at life's highest goal who, *knowing* the most and best, and seeking to *have* all he needs and can wisely use, and *doing* the best and most, rests not content in any of these, but hungrily pushes on towards purity of heart and simplicity of life. The greatest ambition is not knowledge nor possessions, nor notable achievement, but it is in *being* pure, and strong, and gentle, and warm; that is to say, being Christly.

It makes the heart glow to remember that this highest achievement of life is open to all. Only the few, the very few, become widely versed in knowledge, or possess large means, or achieve the notable things. The great majority of us remain ignorant and poor and obscure. But any of us, and every one of us, may reach to the highest level in this highest sphere. The mountain white, the plantation black, the man crowded in the city slum or in roomier, pleasanter quarters, the savage just emerging from his generations of savagery, the cultured and university-bred, the money rich and the money poor—all may enter here, and reach to the highest rung.

The one most limited in circumstance may touch the loftiest level. The one in most favored conditions may go as high, but can go no higher.

And mark keenly how this affects all the life in these other matters. Where the warm, vitalizing touch of the spirit of Christ is upon the life there is an eager thirst for knowledge. The new birth always includes a new mental birth too. There will be earnestness in the vocation, the occupation; a strong purpose to make things count for the most. There will be too an aggressive spirit of work and service, a desire to achieve the best possible within reach. But these will grow up out of that first; they will have the sweet wholesomeness of the dominant purpose of the life. The passion to be masterful in purity, in gentleness of strength, and simplicity of life, with Jesus as both example and inspiration, will be the dominant thing.

This is the mountain top. Here is the pure, invigorating air, the far view of great beauty and inspiration, the inward sense of strength from the climb, and rarest fellowship with like spirits. A man never gets to the tip-top, though. For as the top is reached a new top higher up comes into view, and then from that a higher yet. There is always the upward lift of a higher level just above.

But the climber can't get very high alone. He would better not try. He is apt to make some bad stumbles, and lose the main road. He does not need to go alone. There is a Man waiting at the

beginning of the path, with a face that is scarred but rarely beautiful, and a most winsome way. He has been up the road with many others. Those scars tell the story of the road He has travelled. We may each go along with Him as our personal guide and friend on the way. Let us go.

THE PROBLEM OF SELF-MASTERY

The Greatest Battlefield.

Ditching Life's Stream.

The Original Image.

"Study to Keep Quiet."

Living Musically.

In Step with God.

Living in the Essentials.

The Foes of Self-Mastery.

Yielding to the Mastery of Jesus.

The Problem of Self-Mastery

The Greatest Battlefield

The greatest battlefield on which a man ever fought is within himself. The greatest victories are there. Victory there is the greatest victory possible in a man's life. All the great achievements of men outside of themselves are less than the achievement of getting mastery of themselves. Victory here means victory elsewhere.

All other problems of the personal sort are included in this. Their solution is included in its solution. There must be practical understanding about sin, and real power over it, before there can be self-mastery. For it was sin that first stole self-mastery away. Selfishness must be seen and gripped in its subtle as well as its coarse forms, before the sweets of the finest self-mastery can be tasted. Doubt must be mastered, at least far enough to give a steady footing and steady going, if the fragrance of self-mastery is to fill the life. Only he who sees clearly the highest ambition of life, and holds everything else strictly under, can climb the heights here.

A man's foes are those of his own household, the

household of his own person and his own life. Victory here brings the strength that wins on every other field. And victory on any other field, or every other, is robbed of its sweets, if a man is whipped on this field of his own personality.

The man who can rule wisely and masterfully within his own spirit is greater than he who rules a state or a nation or a great corporation. It is true there must be some mastery of self before there can be mastery of others, but then we are not talking about partial mastery, except as it is a stepping-stone up to the highest.

The greatest mastery is self-mastery. The greatest man is he who has become master of himself, not in the limited sense of some who do notable things on other fields, but in the finest, fullest sense. This is the most fascinating of all problems. It is a continuous problem, ever yielding to solution, yet never fully solved. For every high level reached shows a higher beyond, so great is the possibility lying within one's self.

Man was made like God and to have dominion over all the lower creation. That is the Bible way of saying that he was to be master of his own self, and through that self-mastery to be master of all creation. The man eager to reach the highest mastery will study God, for here is the original plan for himself. He will keep in close contact with the Original. The closer that touch the nearer does he come to his own true self.

Ditching Life's Stream.

Self-mastery requires a full knowledge of one's self, or at least a steadily growing knowledge. It means a reverential regard for the marvellous functions and powers that he finds within himself. Control requires knowledge, as well as more than knowledge. Increasing knowledge leads the way to increasing mastery, and should lead to greater reverence.

The man who reverences his wonderful powers is held off just that far from sin. The man who sins despises himself. Sin is never reverential. It is always profane. Self-mastery is always reverential, towards God most and first, then towards the man himself made in the image of God, and then towards all other men in that same image, and towards all of God's creation. The man who sins is blurring and blotting out the fine image of God imprinted on himself. Knowledge of one's self, and reverence for one's self, are open doors, one after the other, into purity and maturity and control.

We have talked together a bit about the ideal man in the talk on ambition. And one should keep that ideal clearly in mind. There are three spheres within one's self, the body, the mind, and the spirit. Self-mastery means fullest culture and control of all three of these. Spirit culture is the rarest to be found of any of the three. But a full, rounded culture of all three, each in itself, and each in due relation to the others, is rarer still.

But there is yet more to be said here. A man has three relationships, inward to himself, upward to God, outward to his neighbor. The relationship to God holds the key to the other two. There is ever the tendency to push some one of these at the expense of the others. How sin has unsteadied our nerves, and given a twist to our eyes! To keep true and steady the upper relation means to keep the others true too. The nearer to God a man gets the nearer does he come to his own true possible self. And the nearer to God the closer to one's fellows always; and not only the closer, but the purer and stronger and fairer that neighborly contact will be.

Self-mastery means holding true to one's relationships, upward, inward, outward. There are men who are regarded as masterful men who yet ignore their relationship to God. They *are* masterful. They reveal rare power. Yet it is one-sided. Another side, the upper, is untouched, ignored; and the one-sided mastery itself is incomplete because it can become full only through what comes in from above. The stream of life flows down from above, it flows in and through, and then flows out to others. Any other running of the stream by ditches or dams is changing nature's order, and spoils the life. It will either stagnate and grow green slime on its surface, or else it will run low and run out.

The Original Image.

Self-mastery means holding one's self and one's powers steady to their true use; not lack of use, deficiency; nor over-use, prodigality; nor misuse, the inappropriate, the improper; nor abuse, the injurious; but nature's true, full use. It does not mean repression but control, full *ex*pression through control. It recognizes that what is not controlled goes to extremes; weak, bad, wrong extremes.

Nowhere is the hurt of sin seen more than in the unsteady, uneven swing of the pendulum of life. Sin is a sort of magnet pulling it unduly over to one side and holding it there, or giving it a wobbling movement. Mastery is holding things steady to their true use. One needs to know what their true use is, and then to have the strength of purpose, and the greater strength of discipline—tested purpose—and then something more, to hold him steady to the high aim.

Mastery of self through mastery by God, and in order to be of service to one's fellows, is the ideal one should steadily strive for. A man should not be afraid of that fine word ideal. It is held up to ridicule quite a bit. It is sometimes used for something impractical, up in the clouds, quite out of reach. It should rather be used for that towards which a man aims. The ideal is the perfect natural standard towards which one should be ever reaching and stretching up. Jesus said, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is

perfect." He wouldn't have told us to do it, if it couldn't be done. There is not only an ideal, "be ye perfect," but the highest possible ideal, "as your *Father* is perfect."

It is a peculiar quality of the true ideal that it is never reached; for when reached it *grows* under the reaching touch into something finer and higher and yet more attractive. True ideals are wonderfully stimulating. They grow as they are touched. And while there is a sense of gladness and content in the touch, that very touch itself gives a yearning for a higher yet, and a new ambitious reaching on and up.

The closer a man sticks to the Original the nearer will he come to self-mastery. The original of man is God. To know God is to come to know our possible selves—the men we should be, and the men we will be. God is all the time revealing Himself to us in nature, in the wondrous Bible, in our own inner spirits. We should be eager to know Him, for so we come to know ourselves. And if we will know Him in the deeper sense of friendship's intimacy we shall come to be like Him again. That is self-mastery. Our greatest Teacher said: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and Him whom thou didst send, Jesus Christ."

"*Study to Keep Quiet.*"

There are four great traits of God to be seen in nature, in His Word, and in His speaking within one's inner spirit.

God is *quiet.* The earth has grown noisy. Nature is still. There are storm noises and earthquakes, but these result from disturbances above and below. Both the disturbances and the noises are abnormal, not true to nature. Man has become noisy. God is quiet. Noise reveals weakness; something is out of gear or tune. Sound is rhythm. Noise is discord; it is a result of friction always, a jarring of two or more forces. The members of the orchestra are not controlled by the leader's eye; they are free-lancing. Strength is still. It may give a sound, but it is always a sound of stillness. It is rhythmic, harmonious, musical.

God is quiet. He is revealing Himself, all the time, up to the highest possible limit, to His much-loved race of men. But He can come in only through an opened door. He can reveal Himself only to the man who opens his door. Sympathy with God, oneness of spirit with Him, is the key. A spirit of quiet stillness opens the life to this marvellous, quiet God. We can all recall how, in moments of quietness, God has spoken into the inner ear, and we have long remembered what He said. We can remember, too, how at such times His speaking has deepened the quiet in our souls. God would woo us into that quietness of spirit akin to his own, that we may be living again in our native atmosphere—His presence.

To a man absorbed in Christian activity, rushing, pushing, with nerves on tension and blood

boiling, who wearily turned to God in prayer, there came one day into the inner ear, as he was on bent knees, a Voice speaking with great softness and equally great clearness, "*Study to be quiet.*" It brought a great hush into his spirit; in the following days it became a veritable sheet-anchor, holding the bark steady in many a storm. Its variations were brooded over that new life might come out of its inner depths; "study to keep quiet"; "be ambitious to be unambitious," in the world's abused meaning of that word ambitious.

Many personal, practical applications, quietly, gradually worked themselves out of it into the fibre of habit. Keep the body quiet, the voice quiet, the eyes quiet, the thoughts, the imagination, the emotions quiet. Put on nature's pneumatic tires and rubber heels. "But," you say, "how self-conscious that must make one!" No, not if you do it quietly, naturally. Quiet does not mean repression. It means the natural expression of mastery, neither overdone nor underdone. Mastery is holding true to nature. Mastery means quietness, the quietness of rhythm, of the sun's swing, of the dew's fall, of God's action in all nature, of the truly masterful man's natural life.

As the days went their rounds, there came trooping to the support of this message, one by one, a group of *quiet* verses. From out the midst of that stormy Forty-sixth Psalm came the quiet, commanding note, "Be still and know that I am

God,"[1] with its alternate reading, "Let go and know that I am God." Let go your will and plans and you will find Somebody's else will and plans for you. Let go of yourself, and you will become conscious of Him. Be still, be *still*, and you will find God, and in finding Him be finding your own true self, for in His image were we made. But what a lot of persistent practising that "be still" does take!

Into the hearts of many thousands have been sung, in classical music, those words of David's, "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."[2] The margin of the Revision gives fine coloring, "Be still before the Lord." But the beauty, as well as the deep, simple philosophy, or, rather, the beauty because of the philosophy, comes out best in Luther's translation, "Be silent to God, and let Him mould thee." The wondrous power of silence when it is in God's presence, and towards Him!

The One hundred and seventh Psalm,[3] which the Hebrews sang responsively in their temple service, pictures vividly such a storm at sea as many a man has known upon the sea of his life, or the inner sea of his heart. But the great change comes when the oft-repeated "they" is changed to "He"—"He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." His hands sweep the human keyboard and discord gives way to sweet music. And what a wealth of human experience is in the next line, "Then

[1] Psalm 46:10. [2] Psalm 37:7. [3] Psalm 107:26-32.

are they glad because they be quiet." The return to quiet is a return to natural life, as planned by the Giver of life.

This vein of gold comes again to the surface in the Gospels. Matthew's kingly narrative gives the imperial touch to the same storm scene on Galilee's blue waters: "He rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."[1] "Rebuked!" Something was wrong; somebody misbehaving; they were raising a storm. The Master appears with His rebuke. He was recognized. There was a great calm. If He were ever recognized and honored there would always be a great calm. And there can be mastery only when there is calm, nature's true condition. A change of figure couples with that this, also from Matthew: "And He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she arose and ministered to them."[2] The riot of fever in the blood, angry faces, green eyes, hooked fingers! His touch—the fever goes, the storm is stilled, a great calm, then service. Only calm hands can serve truly.

The Old Testament brings up a familiar line that has strengthened many a life in stress: "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength."[3] Confidence is quiet. Fear is always flurried. Strength is stored away in quietness. Out of the quiet comes new strength. That exquisite, simple, Oriental love story, Ruth, has in it a bit that contains meaning for one's heart apart from its original significance: "Sit

[1] Matthew 8:23–27. [2] Matthew 8:15. [3] Isaiah 30:15.

still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not rest until he have finished the thing this day."[1] We who have Paul's prison psalm[2] find in its confident assertion—"He who began a good work will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ"—good reason for spelling Ruth's "man" with a capital M in our personal thinking of it, and finding in that sweet story fresh stimulus to sitting *still.*

God revealed Himself to Elijah one morning early in "a sound of gentle stillness."[3] The shepherd singer says, "He leadeth me beside the waters of quietness."[4] Job's true comforter reminds that much troubled man, "When He giveth quietness, who then can condemn?"[5] Solomon's God-given wisdom has this: "A tranquil heart is the life of the flesh."[6] Fitting the Ninety-first Psalm into its likely historical setting of the thirty-third chapter of Exodus suggests this free translation of its first verse: "He that goeth aside to sit still in the secret place with the Most High shall find Him coming over so close that he shall be lodging under the shadow of the Almighty One."[7] These are some of the *quiet* verses that grew up around that first one. And there are more. They should be looked up slowly, and breathed in deeply.

These statements reveal God. They reveal the true spirit in men who had found God, and

[1] Ruth 3:18. [2] Philippians 1:6. [3] I. Kings 19:12 margin. [4] Psalm 23:2. [5] Job 34:29. [6] Proverbs 14:30 (American Revision). [7] Psalm 91:1, with Exodus 33:7–11.

were living in Him. They reveal the true spirit of man. Quietness is the native air of man. All his powers work best when they work in an atmosphere of quiet. He can do better work; he can do more; he can do it more easily, for he is moving in his native element.

Quietness is a characteristic of self-mastery, as well as an essential to it. But quietness does not mean sleepiness, stupidness. It does not mean the inactivity of laziness. It means keen alertness to all that is passing, full readiness to respond, with the steam up, and the hand on the throttle while all is still and under control.

Living Musically.

A second great trait of God is *rhythm.* Everything He does is done with the sweet beat and swing of harmony. The word we commonly use for this is method, or system. The finer word is rhythm; that brings out the ease and music of it.

Nature is rhythmical. There's a fine swing to it. Rhythm is music. Life is musical, though many fail to see the leader's stick, and don't catch the pitch nor keep time, and so flat badly and drag, and lose the uplift of it all. All growth in life is by the musical pendulum-swing back and on, with the clock hands steadily telling out the onward movement.

The waters of the sea ever flow back and on from ebb tide toward flood. The moon rises and goes down to rise a bit higher each night, in a larger circle, until the full is reached, and disa-

appears by the same gradual rhythmic swing. So we get a measure of time, a moon-th or month. The sun rises and falls through the same sort of rhythm, with its own variations, and a larger swing, from lowest point to highest and back to lowest, making the longer measure of our time. The seasons go from the ebb of dead winter to new spring life, then full flood of summer life, then autumn's decline, and dead winter, when for a while nature is at rest gathering vitality. The day rises gradually from modest dawn to full noon, and so back to its sleep at night.

The musical rhythmic beat is in all nature and in all life. Were our ears less dulled, and less absorbed in a different sort of thing, we could ever hear the music of God in nature. Through the music of nature as well as its great beauty He speaks to us and reveals Himself. God is musical. Man's love of music, so universal, is evidence of the self-mastery to which he was born. You can't force music. It must go in its own time, or it isn't music. We work best when we work musically, with a fine beat and swing to all our movements; not only best, but do most, and do it most easily.

Soldiers on march cover a greater distance, with less tire, when the band is playing. Young people in the gymnasium get more enjoyment and more good out of the exercise when it is done to the sound of the piano. So with the little ones in the kindergarten. Tired-out men are rested by music. The world and the Church come

together here; music is the common element in the theatre and the church service. Men love music. It is a bit of the original image of God in us. Men noted for great achievement are, in varying degree, always men of method, of rhythm, of swing in the thing they do best. Self-mastery means rhythm. It requires deep peace as its basis; that is, absence of discord, and of the jarring note. As one comes back into full sweet chord with God there comes the sweet peace, and then the full swing of nature's rhythm, and so the heritage of self-mastery.

In Step with God.

And God is *unhurried;* though our word for it is "slow." We say slow because the fever of sin is in our blood, and sends us down the road on a rush. All life is fevered. The heart beats faster than normal; the temperature is too high; the eyes have an unnatural brightness; the nerves are strung up dangerously near to a break. And all the time breaks are happening. But the fever seems to intensify.

Man calls nature slow. The growth of the trees, the passing of the year through its seasons—we call these things slow. But nature reveals God. It tells both of Himself, and of His method of work. Nature seems slow because of this riot of fever in our blood. Nature is normal; the other is abnormal, not true to nature.

I suppose the insects at our feet, if they could think, would probably think our movements very

slow. How long it must seem that a man's foot stays on the ground when he is walking, even walking fast. The ant down there can scurry along several times its own length while that foot remains unmoved. But the length of the foot's stay on one spot tells of the size of the body it is holding up and swinging forward.

God's movements seem so slow to us. His march through history, the coming of justice to the weak and oppressed, the shining of light in the dark places—all this has so often been called slow. God is so big, so great. He is moving steadily on. The apparent slowness only spells out the greatness of His size and of His plans. It takes time to swing great things forward. Time is but a hyphen between two eternities. God lives and moves in eternity. He breathes in the atmosphere of greatness.

We are too apt to play the part of the ants scurrying hastily, hurriedly, breathlessly along, and when we do look up, if we do, think how slow that One up there does seem. But in this we are not true to our real selves. We are like God. We belong to eternity more than to time. It is this fever that's bothering us. Man needs the soothing, controlling touch of God ever upon his life if the fever is to go, and never to return.

God is unhurried. He is keenly watching; never indifferent. He is accurate; never missing the mark of His purpose. He is prompt; never ahead of time, and never late. Man was made in the image of God. As he turns his face full

up to God, and breathes in slowly and fully his native air again, he will rise again into the fine self-mastery promised for him.

But unhurried does not mean slow, nor indifferent, nor sleepy. It means the measured, onward movement of a great spirit with a great purpose and limitless power behind.

The other word for unhurriedness is patience. Nothing reveals strength more than patience, the power to hold still while waiting. Nothing disturbs much fine planning of good people more than the lack of patience. We are all children in our impatience. Patience is the most God-like quality that man can have. It has keen eyes, and quick ears, and a warm heart; it means seeing keenly, and feeling deeply and acutely, yet holding still until the fulness of time has come for action.

Self-mastery is keeping step with God. Not running ahead of Him, nor lagging behind Him, but going at His pace. We miss much of what He is saying to us because we don't keep His pace, and stay alongside. We lose the immense uplift of seeing His great plans and far-reaching movements in our feverish haste to do things for Him. Self-mastery means keeping His pace. It is unhurried.

Living in the Essentials.

There is always a *simplicity* about God and His movements. His glory is overwhelming to human eyes and senses. The chosen leaders of the

new Hebrew nation could not bear the awful glory of His presence. Yet this but tells of the contrast between His glory and purity, and sinful man. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him." Yet this reveals the tenderness that protects our weak eyes from the dazzling sight of His presence.

When He speaks in creation it is in simplest language. He walks in Eden in closest intimacy of fellowship with man with a simplicity very winsome. The revelation of Himself there suggests the simplicity of greatness. Greatness is simple. And man is very great for he is in the image of of God. As he allows the image to be reproduced in him he increases in his simplicity. The spirit of self-mastery is always simple.

Sin tangles things up. It makes life complex in a confused way. It blurs and dulls our understanding, and weakens our grasp, and so things that are great but really simple seem confused to us. We get confused and tangled up. True life is simple. That word has been having new currency of late, and has been misunderstood some. It does not mean crude, nor immature, nor lacking in culture as some have thoughtlessly seemed to think. It means clear understanding of essentials and direct action. It sifts through the mix-up of our common life, and seizes upon the things that are essential, and grasps them firmly, and is controlled accordingly.

A huge piece of machinery seems very intricate and complex to one not experienced in

its make-up and workings. But to the engineer its law of action is simple. A sense of dread sometimes fills the mind at the sight of giant wheels and beams in motion; a dread of the immense power, and of what might happen. But while conscious of the enormous power there, the engineer moves calmly in and out with his oil can, and touches the central wheels quietly. It is all simple to him, for he understands.

Being with God gives one understanding. It clears his eyes. He comes more and more to see things through God's eyes. So he comes into the simplicity of God, and of the self-poise and self-mastery that are his birthright. He becomes simple in thinking of himself. While recognizing and reverencing the great powers within himself, he knows that these are a *gift* to him. He has nothing that he hasn't received from Another. And these powers and talents can come to their full growth only under the constant influence and presence of their Giver.

Man needs an atmosphere if he is to reveal his greatness. The tree must have its atmosphere of sunlight and air and water and food, else it cannot live. God is the atmosphere of man. Only in the presence of God, in closest intimacy with Him, under the warm touch of His breath, does he come into his growth. And getting clear in his relation to God simplifies a man's contact with his fellows, and simplifies all of his thinking of life. Simplicity is seeing clearly what is essential and what is detail—non-essential, and

being controlled accordingly. So man rises up into the full mastery of himself through his utter dependence upon God.

But simple does not mean crude nor rude, not immature nor lacking in culture. It means being controlled by the essentials, which themselves are always few and simple.

Here are found great traits of self-mastery. It is quiet, and rhythmic; it is unhurried, and simple.

The Foes of Self-Mastery.

There are four tempting demons of very subtle spirit constantly besieging the path of self-mastery. They are apt to come by turns, not all at once. They make a sort of relay race of it; as quickly as one seems held in check or winded, another takes its place, and the new arrival is usually the opposite of the last one. Yet oft-times they come in a bunch, all together, with a rush. These four enemies are lack of use, deficiency; over-use, prodigality; misuse, the inappropriate, the improper; and abuse, the injurious.

The man who catches fire with a noble purpose is apt to be attacked by the temptation to over-use his powers. He feels the strong tide of the needs and of the possibilities of life. Life becomes to him an emergency, with himself as the chief factor in meeting it. He seems to be occupying the central position; so much depends upon him. His view of the need or possibility becomes too

intense. It shuts out the broader view of a plan, the great wise plan of a master Planner in which he is simply a part; an important part it may be, yet but a part; the responsibility for the whole is upon broader shoulders. This temptation comes very strongly, with the rush of a storm down the valley; many a man is swept off his feet by it.

The result is bad. Through over-use the man loses the chief thing with which to work and fight —his mastery of himself; the working, fighting power. The cause he would carry through is helped much, and may be hindered more, because he does not bring to its aid the best weapon he can use—self-mastery. If a man in his weakness persist here the over-use is apt to lead to both misuse and abuse. His bodily strength fails; through that the judgment is impaired; the vision blurs; the will grows unsteady, either weak or stubborn; and serious mistakes are made. Tired-out nerves lose the sense of proportion. Details look big and awesome. One's strength and gifts are used as they were not meant to be.

And some catch fire from below, with the ignoble flames that belong lower down than the human level. They are caught by the fires of self-seeking. Self becomes and remains the horizon of the life. They have no eyes to see over the boundary lines of their own needs and lives. All the tides of life washing up and out are reckoned only as incoming tides beating ever on the shores of self. The self-fires send out some

brilliant sparks and flashes, and warm some needy folks by their glow. But this is incidental; they are kindled and fed by the man primarily for himself. There is no sacrifice involved in the heat given out. It costs nothing. On the contrary, it only feeds the flames of self-praise. Misuse saps a life of the sweets of self-mastery.

And some are kindled with the fiercely burning fires of low passion that burn out hot and quick. Or, the highly colored flames of pleasure get control. The masterful man is controlled in everything by a high, strong purpose, never by pleasure. Pleasure comes, and is all the keener, and leaves no dregs, because not sought. True pleasure is the sweet fragrance of life brought out under the pressure of a strong purpose. It should never be an end in itself. It comes as a restful cushion to a man absorbed in his purpose.

Sometimes there is a smouldering or waiting of the soul-fires. The fire is there but has not yet broken out into flames. Then some event, simple in itself or perhaps great, is the whiff of fresh oxygen that brings the burst of flame. So it seems to have been with Jesus. With all reverence be it said that He seems to have first caught fire, as a boy, in Jerusalem. That visit to the holy city and temple was the match that ignited all the wondrous nature within.

The man who catches fire sometimes lets that fire die down, and sometimes die out. That is always a tragedy. The man has had his vision. He has felt the upper pull upon his powers and

responded to it, and then has yielded to the suction of lower things. The lapping waves of selfishness have been allowed to creep in and put the fire out. This is one of the sad and frequent tragedies of human life.

But some people never catch fire at all. They never wake up. Their powers lie sluggishly asleep while they drift slowly along with the moving tide made by others. They never feel the blessed contagion of the fire of God. Their powers lie wrapped up in closely folded napkin-cloths, under heavy clods, that never know pick or spade. A man never amounts to anything until he catches fire. Lack of use robs many men of self-mastery, and robs the needy world of their needed help.

Mastery means full use and full control; it does not mean repression, but full expression through control. It means control of the body, developed, and held to its true use; control of the mental powers developed fully and held steady to their true use; above all, control of spirit, the master of all, developed and reigning masterfully over all. The highest seems to yield last and hardest. Lack of control in the realm of one's spirit seems the commonest of all weaknesses. It may crop out in the wild outburst of rage, or the sullen, silent rage yet more to be feared, with its tenacious memory and secret plottings.

Men strong in every other way often seem weak here. And in time the whole fabric is affected.

Nothing injures the body more than a fierce outburst of temper. And in time the body, tired-out or weakened through disease, is responsible for much lack of control on the higher levels. Greater is he that controlleth his spirit than he who can control everything else but cannot do this.

The Mastery of Jesus.

That rarely masterful man Paul gives us a bit in one of his letters that is full of fascination here. He has been speaking of the fierce storms of passion that leave many a man badly shipwrecked. Then he passes quickly on to speak of the man who masterfully rides all storms, and brings his cargo safely in. The latter man has a pilot on board who is responsible for the glad result. But instead of a storm figure Paul uses a fruit figure. He says:[1] "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness," and then the climax is reached in "self-control," or self-mastery.

The eight traits named first are really an analysis of that named last. Each is a phase of self-mastery. Note them again. Self-mastery is the tender outgoing of the heart towards God and all men; this is the normal attitude of man unhurt by sin; anything less or different is abnormal. It is the deep glow of the heart-fires regardless of the dampening dews of outer circumstances;

[1] Galatians 5: 22.

the quiet, steady stillness of spirit even when winds blow hard and storms beat fiercely; the patient enduring without time-limit of misunderstandings and all that hurts through them; the gracious bending of one's strength to the needs of others; the being thoroughly, wholesomely good; the forgetting of one's self in the absorbing thought of God and of man; and the full unflagging meeting of all that is due from us or needed from us.

This winsome picture of self-mastery is the result of the Spirit's sway. This is a return to original conditions. The wondrous Spirit who created man's home, and then man himself, comes down at Jesus' bidding to live in us. He restores the original likeness blurred and rubbed out by sin. Here is the secret of self-mastery. A man never achieves it alone. Self is no match for self. It takes more than self to master self. This mastery is not *by* self; it is *of* self by Another living within and working out His plans by our request and glad consent. He who in the early dawn of man's life breathed into his nostrils the breath of life comes to rebreathe in us, and reproduce all of his original ideal. Man had broken with Him through sin. Now the break has been mended by Jesus, and the original likeness is restored by His Spirit within.

The habitual cultivation of the friendly mastery of Jesus draws out most the mastery of self and of circumstances. The keeping of the body pure and sound and under the thumb of the will; the

keeping of the mind clear and quiet and alert and ever bending towards a keener discipline; the keeping of the social contacts simple and warm and cheery; the keeping of the spirit ruggedly strong and softly gentle; the keeping of the heart pure in its loves and motives; the meeting of all difficulties and disappointments with the cheeriness which regards these as mere subways through to places farther up the road; and with all this, under and through, above and around all, a simple, confiding trust in God that sings most when the subway lights all go out—this is the roadway to self-mastery.

It was trodden by Jesus when down here. It may be trodden by every man who yields to the mastery of Jesus. There is no mastery without the Master. The same Holy Spirit who controlled Jesus' human life has come down at Jesus' request to control our lives. With Him alongside, in control, a man can climb the road up to the heights. Let us go along with Him.

THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

The Commonness of Pain.
Sorts of Pain.
The Source of Pain.
Jesus and Pain.
The Mission of Pain.
Compensations.
Victory.

The Problem of Pain

The Commonness of Pain.

Pain is as common in life as salt in the sea, and has the same bitter tang and the same power to purify. It stands with hungry hawk eyes at both ends of a man's life; it comes ahead of him at birth, is usually felt at death, and keeps close by, with haunting vigilance, all the way between.

It has all the qualities of the fire that burns, of the knife that cuts, of the bitter drink that makes you shrink back, and of the acid that eats its way insistently in. And some have found that it has other companion qualities; for fire cleanses, the surgeon's knife cuts out the bad, the bitter drink tones up, and the acid neutralizes the evil.

Everybody has suffered pain, and does, and will. It is as common as sin, and has the same biting taste. One can scarcely walk the streets, or attend a church service without seeing the badge of pain in face, or form, or dress. The mail coming in, and the calling cards, contain the same dark reminder. Ever since Eden the broken sob of its music has sounded through time as a minor dirge, but with the constant interruption of discord, and of loss of all sense of rhythm.

In some lives the problem of pain pushes its keen edge in early; in some not for a long while; but sooner or later it comes, demanding imperiously to be considered and explained. No problem has been more puzzling, or more puzzled over, and none more acute, because it edges its sharp way so very close into the life, and so near to the most tender and sacred relationships. It has baffled much study, and embittered the lives of thousands. But other thousands, though not understanding fully, have learned the secret of extracting sweets in the place where bitter grows. Many have found in it, or, better, *through* it, the elixir of a new life.

Sorts of Pain.

Pain is of two general sorts, pain of body and pain of spirit. At the time of that first break in Eden, Eve was told that there would be pain of body in the natural course of her life, quite apart from sickness or disease, and that prophetic word has had continuous fulfilment through all the centuries since. Pain through disease which disturbs the body, and through the weakness that keeps it from its full stint of work, has been as common. Then pain of body through violence, through man's inhumanity to his brothers, and through the ravages of war, has added intensity to the sum of suffering.

Pain of spirit is keener, harder to bear, and lasts longer than pain of body. It comes through bitter remorse or regret over one's own conduct,

through disappointed hopes and plans, through lack of being appreciated, and through lack of a return love. It comes through the subjection of our immature powers to discipline, which need not be painful but most often is, in proportion to the strength of the character so being matured; it comes through the chafing of an unwilling spirit against the simple, natural discipline of life, which brings out fully our strength and beauty.

Then in our relation to others pain comes through failure in those we love, through being deceived by them, and through the wounding of family pride. The pain suffered by our loved ones brings keen pain to us, and the pain of having them slip from our grasp out of life may be shorter, but is always sharper and severer, with the dull throbbing that so often follows.

There is a sharp pain through culture, proportioned in its sharpness to the extent of the culture, and softened in its expression by the warmth of one's sympathy with others. The ear trained to finest harmonies is keenly sensitive to poor music. The eye trained to fine blending of colors is pained by immature and untaught work. The mind drilled to the discriminating use of simple, strong language suffers a bit at contact with the reverse. The heart made pure through contact with God, and through painful heroic discipline, is pained at the sight and touch of sin.

The heart grown tender through the Spirit of Jesus within is hurt by the suffering of the dis-

tressed. The spirit made eager for the highest ideals in life through the study of the Bible, the classic of ideals, is pained over the conditions prevalent in all walks of life. The man who knows the blessedness of knowing God bleeds at heart for those ignorant of Him.

The emergency that the whole world is in through sin calls for sacrifices that bring great pain of spirit. A young man in a small church college in the middle West was stirred by the needs of the foreign mission fields. He determined to offer his life and service to help meet that need. But before committing himself actively with his church authorities he wrote to her who had given him life, telling her of the burning desire in his heart, and asking her consent. By and by the answering letter came. It was blotted with tears. Its pages brought up a vivid picture of that mother's face and heart. She replied, in effect giving her consent, and then writing down these words: "I never knew until now how much it cost God to give His Son."

Many a one has suffered all these different sorts of pain at some time, and many of them at the same time. They all gather within the human spirit, incased temporarily in a human body. Job suffered pocket pain through loss of property, heart pain through loss of his children, pain of body through disease, pain to his pride through loss of prestige and the criticism of his friends, pain of spirit in puzzling over why it all came to him; then the hardest bodily pain in continued

pain, and at the last the severest spirit pain in realizing how different he was from the God he worshipped.

The Source of Pain.

Pain is the distressed outcry of a broken order; pain of body comes through some breaking of nature's arrangements there; pain of spirit through consciousness of elements within or without that strain and jar, and clash and break. All pain is a result of sin, somebody's sin, sometime, somewhere. The connection can rarely be traced, and never traced fully, but it is there.

That connection may be direct, where a man's own actions cause the break that cries out its distress in pain. Through ignorance of the body's nature and needs, or through thoughtlessness or passionate desire where we do know, the break is made. The pain does not always come at once. Nature is very patient and long-suffering, but come it will, however long the wait, for she is likewise very exacting. Countless instances of so called "mysterious providences" are a result of hardships we thoughtlessly or wilfully inflict upon our bodies.

For a number of years I have been trying to observe closely instances where sickness and death have come, causing a great shock and deep sorrow, and either criticisms of God or a long drawn sob over the strange dispensations of providence. Yet from the bits of information available it was, in each instance, clearly evident that the death

that seemed so untimely and strange could be traced directly to the person's own acts done in ignorance; but most times, if not always, a thoughtless ignorance that a bit of thinking could have prevented.

Then there is the indirect or more remote connection. Whatever we believe about original sin as a teaching of moral truth, we are all compelled to believe in a transmission, through the blood, of traits that are a result of sin in those who have lived before us, either near or remote. That physical traits and ailments pass faithfully and ruthlessly on through generations is familiar enough. Most men come into life with the story of somebody's sin, whether through carelessness or wilfulness, written down on the tablet of their bodies.

It is extremely common to hear work spoken of as a curse, as though a punishment for man's sin, or a result of his sin. Yet work itself is in no sense a curse, but a positive delight, and a help. But the conditions that sin has woven around work have made much of it a straining, grinding drudgery. The break of sin left and leaves man with less than his normal strength. It has affected the earth so that it does not yield so readily to his efforts, and further increases his stint of work by producing thorns and such growths as must be fought and overcome. And so with less than nature's allowance of strength, and more than nature's allotted task, very much work becomes to thousands a grinding, slaving, cheerless

round that brings pain. It can all be traced to sin, the break in the natural order.

Job's friends, or critics, supposed that his pain and numerous distresses were a punishment sent by God because of his sin. Job resents such talk. He felt instinctively that he had been on such terms with God as to shut out any such thought as punishment. Let it be remembered that God is not punishing men in the sending of pain and affliction. God is not dealing with men in judgment; if He were the case would be settled at once for all of us. Judgment is reserved for future final settlement. And even then punishment is not a thing that God chooses to be meted out to us as a judgment for our misdeeds. It is something included in the sin itself. The worst thing God could do to any man would be to leave him utterly alone to the working out of his sin. In great graciousness He does not do that. But He does keep hands off in part, and permits much of the result of sin to work its way out. And so pain comes through the break in the natural order.

The first mention of pain in the Bible is in connection with the difficulty with which woman would perform the most difficult and delicate task entrusted to her. All the life of the body is from God. The natural life is lived in full contact with Him. That first sin was a break with God. Any break interrupts partially the flow of life from Him to us. The bodily duties are then done with difficulty, for some of its vital-

ity has been cut off. In the most difficult duty the lack is most keenly felt.

Had we fulness of knowledge, and subtlety of insight, every bit of pain could be traced clearly, logically, step by step back to some act of sin. And the tracing would be thought a strangely interwoven network of sin and that which sin causes. This does not necessarily mean that the pain is the result of the sin of the man who suffers the pain. Clearly there is a vast amount of pain on account of others' acts.

Life is such an intricate network that no man can move or breathe without affecting somebody else. How terribly selfish sin is. Every act of sin brings pain to somebody else, to those nearest and most tenderly loved, and those at the farthest reach of influence. Jesus suffered severest, keenest pain of both body and spirit through sin—the sin of others. Every bit of pain that came to Him came either through particular acts of sin, or through the whole fog of sin that enveloped His life as an atmosphere.

There seems to be on record in the Bible just one exception to this. Jacob was lamed in his body by the strange touch in the night wrestle, in the dark, down by Jabbok's narrow waters. A direct act of God affected the natural order of his body. Yet this seems to be the only instance of the sort mentioned in the long list of Bible biographies. And, too, there may not have been actual bodily pain, though there was a crippled body hindering and hampering his activity. The

condition of his body gave his spirit keen pain, no doubt; yet that was because it reminded him at every step of his wilful stubbornness against God, and God's plan.

And mark keenly that here this unusual thing was done for *service'* sake. God's plan for a world centred at this stage in this one man. In His passionate outreach for a race, He was shut in to using Jacob. The unusual act told the greatness and the acuteness of the emergency.

So there may be in rare cases a direct touch of God when some great purpose requires it. But clearly that is very rare. God does not need to resort to such measures, as a rule. There are always enough doorways opened through sin's breaks to give all the opportunity needed for disciplinary work. The rareness of such action gives peculiar emphasis to the general principle that pain comes through the natural channel of a break in the natural order.

The vast, intricate, subtly intangible, but terribly real network of sin envelops all life. One cannot move without touching and being touched by its meshes. The atmosphere of life has become affected by sin as by a pervasive gray fog. One cannot draw the breath of life, however lacking in mental or spirit culture, without suffering pain, however little he may think of it. The very stupidness to pain at times spells out the commonness of it, and its hardening, dulling effect upon the spirit.

Jesus and Pain.

But it has been said that Jesus came to bear our sins, and all of their results; that through His sacrifice not only are our sins forgiven, but our bodies are to be healed, and all sickness and pain to be removed. It is said that Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil, and this has been taken to mean to destroy both sin and all of its results. And all of this is true, blessedly and wondrously true. Yet simply to say that much is not to tell the whole of the truth. There is more to be added to make clear how sweeping Jesus' work is, not only for all the life of a man, but for all men.

The salvation from sin, and all its results, that Jesus came to work out is not completed. It is completed so far as He is concerned, but not so far as the world is concerned. It is complete in His dying and rising, but not in its application. The "finished work of Christ" for the world *is* finished by Him, but not finished in it. The salvation worked out on the cross is to be worked out among men. Each man's salvation is worked out for him, but not yet fully worked out in him.

The present is a *transition* period, a long period, it is true, now counted into the twentieth century, yet a transition period, preparing the way for a period of fulness. It is a time of working and waiting and looking forward to something much better. Those who stood closest to Jesus

preached [1] that He would remain away until His dying for all men had been made known to all men, then He would return to carry out the fulness of His plan of saving men.

Paul says that then Jesus will put down all our enemies including the last—death, the culmination of all. The fulness of our salvation waits upon the spreading of the news of Jesus to all men. Here is a strong inner motive for world-wide evangelization. The carrying out fully of the Master's plan in that will bring to us the fulness of our freeness from sin and all its results.

But, we are reminded, Jesus healed disease when here, and relieved every form of bodily distress. Yes, He did. The Gospel days were sample days of the Kingdom. Jesus had not yet been accepted, and so the Kingdom was not set up. He had not yet been finally rejected, but was wooing the nation, and so He gave illustrations of Kingdom days and of Kingdom power. We live in the Church period. The Church occupies the gap in the Kingdom. When the Church mission is completed the Kingdom will come in, with the Church itself as a part of the larger movement. Healing, removal of pain, is a law for all in the Kingdom; it is a privilege in the Church for those who will accept it; and a gift to be exercised by the very few who can be entrusted with it.

[1] Acts 3: 21; Romans 8: 20–23; I Corinthians 15: 23–26, with Matthew 24: 14.

The Mission of Pain.

This leads at once to the question of the *mission* of pain. Pain has a great mission. While God does not send pain, He lets it stay, though He might intervene and take it away. While as a rule, with possibly rare exceptions, it comes through sin, it remains through the deliberate purpose of God. God has a great purpose of love in pain. He uses it as His teacher. It is the greatest of all His great teachers. It charges the very highest rates, insists upon the severest discipline, will tolerate nothing short of the highest ideal, needs our sympathetic help in working, and produces the very finest results.

God's greatest struggle has been with the human will. He made man a sovereign in his will, and right well man has proven his sovereignty. All of the great wealth of God's love and planning can be given only by our own free consent. Sin has twisted our eyes. We prefer something else to God's way. Our preference is not good; it is bad; only His is good. He insists upon giving His best. It can be given only through our consent. So His greatest task has been with man's will, to get man's consent to live on God's plan, and receive the wealth of God's planning. A great task it has been; God's hardest task; sometimes an impossible task; some men won't yield. It has been a stupendous task, for man's will has in it the strength of God's will. And sin has swung the will's natural strength over to the extreme of obstinacy.

And so God has had to use the greatest thing He could find to overcome the bad, weak obstinacy in man's will. Pain is His severest, most thorough, oftentimes his only successful agent. He does not make it. Sin made it. He uses it. It is a bit of the diplomacy of love that takes a result of bad, and uses it to offset the bad, and get good. His love must be very great to hold Him steady to His purpose; for what pains any man pains God too, because it pains the man.

There is nothing that so breaks the stubbornness of a man's spirit, and bends the obstinacy of his will, as pain. It comes eating its way in so subtly, so cuttingly, so relentlessly and insistently, that all the footing slips out from under a man, his jaws relax, and his fist loosens into a hand again. Frequently the stiffest-set jaws will consent to relax only under the peculiarly persuasive edge of the knife of pain.

In that old rare gem of literature, the book of Job, the evil that came to Job came through natural channels, at the secret instigation of the evil one, by permission of God, and strictly within the limits He set. When the purpose of God in the moulding of Job's character was secured, the pain was quickly removed, and greater blessings than ever he had known were poured out lavishly upon him.

There is an intensely vivid picture of God's love, its yearningness, and strong patience, and dissatisfaction with less than the best. It is in Malachi's prophecy. The expert workman in

refining metals sits patiently over the pot of liquid metal, picking out the dross sent up to the surface by the intense fire, watching keenly for every speck and spot, until by and by his own face is clearly reflected in that over which he is working. Then, the process complete, the metal pure, the fire is withdrawn. Its work is done.

So, we are told, God does. Pain is a fire, sometimes heated seven times hotter than usual. God's love and great ideal for us hold Him steady while the dross is being removed. He is not content until He sees again clearly reflected that great likeness of Himself in which we were originally made. When the likeness is clear and full the fire is withdrawn. And in the after-glory that shall come the pain will seem light, and the time only a moment; yet how impossible that often seems at the time of suffering.

The last time I heard Mrs. Margaret Bottome she told of meeting an old friend in Europe. This friend was an unusually gifted woman, who knew much of the world's culture and prestige. She had had a bad break in health, and was seeking to find recovery abroad. As Mrs. Bottome met her, so great was the change in her friend's appearance through the illness that she involuntarily exclaimed, "What a wreck!" And the friend quickly replied, with her soul in her voice, "Any wreck for such a shore!" She was already getting a taste of the after-glory. Yet had she gone to school to God with her will earlier,

her bark would have reached the same shore by straight sailing instead of by stranding.

Compensations.

Pain has great compensations. Its power to purify and refine is very great. It shakes loose, and sifts carefully out, the coarse and poor and bad. It weaves over the texture of one's life into a much finer fabric. The fire that burns also cleanses; the knife that hurts so is removing that which will hurt more seriously; the bitter draught from which we draw back so strongly has great tonic power. But the pain needs help to do its best work. There needs to be a looking steadily through the pain up to the great purpose of God, and on to the compensations, if it is to produce the finest results. To be made pure and fine is a full compensation for great pain.

Then there is the sympathy of Jesus. To use the word sympathy of Him in this way is to say that He knew pain. He knew it with a greater intimacy than any other human that has trodden the earth, for He was more keenly sensitive to it. Every pain that man has suffered Jesus suffered, except of course that coming through remorse or regret. Every pain that man knows was intensified in Jesus; the purity of His nature, the sinlessness of His life, the sensitiveness of His great spirit made Him more keenly alive to pain, and so made it the greater as experienced by Him.

But more than that, He went through the trying and maturing experiences of His life that so He

might have a perfect sympathy with our humanity. He was made perfect in His humanity by the experiences He went through. Only so can a man learn. Jesus was perfectly human in going through human experiences. He did it purposely, with a great, strong purpose, that He might be one with us. So He becomes our keen, warm sympathizer.

He suffered pain that so He might help us in our suffering of pain. He can come near because He knows by touch what we know. There is marvellous compensation in this, the sympathy of such a one as Jesus.

A man who knows anything at all of the winsomeness and attractiveness of Jesus would be glad to go anywhere for the chance of getting closer to Him. He doesn't mind a rough road if in it the Master draws nearer; doesn't mind it! —he prefers it under such circumstances. The wild storm on the sea is welcomed if so you feel His arm tighter around you, and His presence more tenderly near, and His face almost seen by your outer eyes.

Jesus relieved suffering when down here long ago. He seemed to delight in relieving it. He would fairly wear Himself out in caring for men, though He had rare wisdom to avoid the bad extremes that we know so well. He seemed to forget His own needs as long as there was any needy body waiting a chance to be healed. Those great miracles of healing were not done to prove His divinity; they were done because

He was divine; it was the love of divinity going out eagerly to His needy race of men. They did prove His divinity, incidentally; but were not done for that purpose, but to relieve men. So He reveals to us His feeling towards pain. He knows its sharp, cutting edge. He has power to remove it. He will remove it for us now if so the higher thing in mind can be reached too. He could, and would, remove it for more if there were more reaching up after the highest. When the pain remains, so does He. When it seems sharpest He comes nearest. And amid the tugging twinges His presence makes one sing joyously, though often with a tremor in the voice,—

"E'en though it be a *cross*
That *raiseth* me,
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee."

Then there is the compensation of being Jesus' messenger to others. Suffering qualifies us for ministering to those who suffer. Without doubt God permits some experiences to come to us that so He may use us to help others passing through just such experiences. I recall an English clergyman speaking of this at a conference in Boston. He had gone through a most trying experience. For days, he said, all was dark to him. He could not understand the way he was being led. At last light broke in through a particular passage of Scripture, and all cleared up. He preached on that passage the next Sabbath morning.

At the close of the service one of his members

came up with eyes aglow, and surprise in her voice, and said, "How did you know what I have been passing through?" He said he didn't know. Then she explained that he had spoken of her identical experience, and through his message the light and peace had come anew to her. Others spoke in surprise of the same thing happening to them. Then he understood, and was grateful indeed to be God's messenger. And more than grateful, he was willing to go through any experience the Master might send if so he could better serve Him among his own fellows. Even so must God do in teaching men. We can tell to others only what we know personally. He can use in telling the truth only those who know it. Experience is equipment for service. Grief qualifies us to help those with like grief.

There is a right use of grief and a wrong, weak use of it. Its right use is to let it be a *motive* impelling us to help those who have had the same trying experience. Its wrong and weak use is to let it remain simply an *emotion* draining our strength. In the midst of his great sorrow Tennyson wrote—

> "Ring *out* the grief that saps the mind,
> For those that here we see no more."

We should ring it out, and resolutely keep it out, as a mere emotion that saps and wears.

Activity in service is a help in bearing what comes. Pain has its temptations. One of them is the use of moral chloroform; the dulling of our

sense of pain in a round of dissipation, or of distracting gayety. It only puts off the evil hour of feeling it more keenly than ever, with less of moral strength with which to bear it.

There are, too, some wondrous compensations in that keen pain of having the one who has been by your side, a bit of your very self, slip from your grasp, out of reach, into the other life. To have known love, to have loved and been loved, is to have known the sweetest and most lasting of all life's joys. It makes one the stronger and gentler. The love that has stood the test of time weaves the finest threads into the life web. To love is to live. The life is richer and deeper, finer and more fragrant, for the love that has come in, and that has been drawn out, even though for a time the one loved and loving has slipped from your side upwards.

Then there is the heritage of a memory that will grow in its fragrance and richness with the passing days. That is one of the cushions to ease the heart, for the bit of time in between now and the future meeting. And then we must not be forgetting that the loss is of companionship down here; all of that; yet only that. That is much, yet it is only for a while, that the old Book calls little, "how little! how little!" [1]

> "A day and you will meet;
> A night and you will greet." [2]

[1] Hebrews 10: 37, literally, "for yet a little while—how little, how little, and He" etc.

[2] Maltbie D. Babcock.

But when you miss present companionship, there is great joy in thinking over the wondrous companionship enjoyed by the one loved, and now gone. The companionship of Jesus now makes that face all alight with the radiance from His, while the marvellous music of the homeland fills ears and heart. Your loved one, side by side with the Master, thinks of you, and is quiet and glad for all the joy coming to you, and all the loving sovereignty of Jesus over your life. He is enjoying the *fulness* of life.

"This is the death of death,
To breathe away a breath,
And know the end of strife,
And taste the endless life.
And joy without a fear,
And smile without a tear,
And work, nor care, nor rest,
And find the last the best." [1]

And if it be the one of closest tie who has gone, a husband or wife, leaving a child in your care, there is more yet of sweet, hallowed compensation. It is the highest relation of life that yields the finest fragrance. For there is the fine fruit of your love, a precious new life, God's gift to you revealing and cementing earth's highest, human love. In your child, his or hers likewise who has gone, that loved one comes again to you, and abides ever with you. And yours is the unspeakable privilege of moulding into finest character this bit of your loved one's life left behind with you. This is a great compensation.

[1] Maltbie D. Babcock.

And so in the midst of greatest pain there may come the sweetest rest of spirit, because of these great compensations. And, more than all else, because of the presence of the greatest Sufferer and greatest Sympathizer as our closest Friend. Through Him is rest in pain of any sort.

"There is a rest that deeper grows
In midst of pain and strife;
A mighty conscious willed repose
In depth of deepest life.
To have and hold the precious prize
No need of jealous fear;
But windows open to the skies,
And skill to read the stars.

Who dwelleth in that secret place,
Where tumult enters not,
Is never cold with terror base,
Never with anger hot.
For if an evil past should dare
His very heart invest,
God is his deeper heart, and there
He enters into rest.

When mighty sea winds madly blow,
And tear the scattered waves,
Peaceful as summer woods below
Lie darkling ocean caves.
The wind of words may toss my heart,
But what is that to me!
'Tis but a surface storm—Thou art
My deep, still, resting sea." [1]

Victory.

But there is a gladder message yet for the bells to ring out tunefully to all men. It is this—there

[1] George MacDonald.

is to be victory over pain. It will be a full victory too, with the flags flying, and the music filling all the air, and sweetest in its filling of all the heart.

There are certain foretastes of victory. The nearer we come to living in full touch with God, with intelligent knowledge of the nature and needs of our bodies, the nearer shall we come to a life free from bodily pain. This will not remove bodily pain and discomfort wholly, for we are a bit of all that has gone before. Each man is a connecting link between two generations. He may change the stream of life flowing into the next generation, and he may change a good bit the stream of life he received from his fathers, but never wholly.

Neither does this affect the pain of spirit through the contact of culture with men and conditions around us. The nearer God one gets and the closer to His ideal for us he grows, the greater is the pain over the ravages of sin, but the steadier too is the faith that sees through to the end of victory.

There is, through Jesus, victory in pain over pain. The hurt remains, but the sting has been extracted. With Him alongside, close up, and the clearer vision of the great purpose, and through to the end, the pain of pain lessens and softens, even while the outer pain remains.

Then there is the final victory. Jesus' resurrection is called a first fruits by Paul! It is a wondrous conception of a winsome truth. First fruits is the language of harvest. The first fruits

is the beginning of the harvest; the great crop remains to be gathered.

There has been a harvest of pain; there is to be a harvest of painlessness. There has been a harvest of sorrow; there will be one of joy. There has been a great harvest of death, of separation, of breakings; there is to be a greater harvest of life, of reunion, of tying up all the old breaks into knots that no fingers will ever undo.

The harvest of pain and sorrow, of death and breakings, has been the result of sin's sowing. The new harvest of painless, joyous, reunited life is through the sowing by Jesus of His own life down among men. Jesus is greater than sin. The coming harvest will be so great as to make the others forgotten. The work that Jesus finished on the cross and the resurrection morning is to be finished in all the earth. The first fruits is to be followed by a great full fruits.

The Bible reaches a thrilling climax in the closing chapter of its closing book. One can believe anew in the divine guidance of the men who put these books of the Bible together as he comes to the climax of surpassing splendor at its close.

The new glory is revealed as a new city. The city has been the superlative of human life. There bad has been worse, and good best. The momentum of man's activities has drawn to the city centre the leadership of life. On the bad side the city has become a condensed epitome of darkness and poverty, of pain and misery, of sin and distress. Here in John's great vision it

becomes the glorified condensation of all that God's love has planned for man.

The presence of God is its glorifying, transforming, radiating atmosphere. "The Lamb is the light thereof." Death has been cast out. There is no mourning, nor crying, nor pain. All the former things are passed away. And in a fine touch it is said that God Himself "shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." That word "away" might better read "out"; "shall wipe *out* every tear." The tear forced out under pain's pressure shall be annihilated, for pain itself has been wiped completely out.

"And there shall be no curse any more, and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and His servants shall serve Him; and *they shall see His face;* and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light; and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages."

The old order has completely passed away. The victory over pain is final and full through Jesus.

THE PROBLEM OF GUIDANCE

A Guide Over Life's Trail.
God Plans Every Life.
God Tells us His Plan for us.
Accepting God's Plan.
A Disciplined Judgment
Unhurried Waiting.
Guided in Judgment.
The Boys and the Tramps.
Instructed in the Night Seasons.
Finding the Life-plan.
"My Sheep Hear My Voice."

The Problem of Guidance

A Guide over Life's Trail.

Nobody thinks of climbing the dangerous passes and peaks of Switzerland without a guide. The experienced travellers are very careful about getting experienced guides. Even then a man sometimes loses his life. These guides have to learn the way at the risk of their own lives, and they take serious risks every time they climb. And this is the sphere where a man can see and feel with his outer material senses.

How much more does a man need a guide for the climb on into the future days, where no man has yet learned how to see or feel an inch ahead. With all our great advances in knowledge and science, we don't know surely a clock's tick ahead what is coming. The coming year, and month, and day,—even the next moment is utterly hidden from our eyes. We are in Egyptian darkness that may be felt, and that is felt, about to-morrow. We are used to it from the earliest birth of life, and move on with a certain steadiness, planning, and shrewdly guessing how certain matters will go.

That very steadiness of step in our common life, on into the unlit darkness of the next hour,

tells of a great Guide whose hand upon life all men have learned unconsciously to trust. But the factor of fear is never absent from human life, though it lessens steadily as one comes to know his Guide. The man who risks going alone in a dangerous mountain climb in daylight is reckoned foolhardy. Even *he* wouldn't go in the dark night. How much worse is it to go alone on the life-climb without even a single ray of daylight to show the way. Yet many do just that. Foolhardy—would you say?

There is a tender awe in knowing that there is some One at your side guiding at every step, restraining here, leading on there. He knows the way better than the oldest Swiss guide knows the mountain trail. He has love's concern that all shall go well with you. There is great peace for us in that, and with it a tender awe to think who He is, and that He is close up by your side. When you come to the splitting of the road into two, with a third path forking off from the others, there is peace in just holding steady and very quiet while you put out your hand and say, "Jesus, Master, guide here." And then to hear a Voice so soft that only in great quiet is it heard, softer than faintest breath on your cheek, or slightest touch on your arm, telling the way in fewest words or syllables—that makes the peace unspeakable.

And if the road lead you into a thick, dark woods, and strange shadowy forms seem to threaten from behind the trees, you go quietly on singing a bit

of a song, because He led you there, and is leading. That path may lead into some commonplace Nazareth village, into some wilderness with untamed beasts, or into some thick Gethsemane grove of gnarly olives, or even up a Calvary hill outside a city wall, but you go steadily on with the path, and the song, and a joy full of glory, for the Master led you there, and has not gone away.

And if perhaps the chosen road lead to crowds and great service and praise of men, you will be thinking it was His leading that brought you there, not your own wisdom or talent. He has some great purpose for these crowds, and may be some purpose *through* these crowds farther on. And you will be very careful not to disappoint or mar His plans. And, too, you will keep very quiet and close that the dust the crowd is raising may not bother your eyes and dim the vision of His face.

And if sometimes the way be lonely and long, and the brambly thorn bushes on the sides scratch face and hands, and sharp stones cut your feet, you can, if you will be quiet enough, find a new softness to the strong arm of the Guide around you, and a new fragrance in His presence beside you; and that will make you grateful for the roughness of the road, because it draws out more the fineness of His love, and of Himself.

God Plans every Life.

Guidance is entirely a matter of finding God's plan, and then following it. God has a plan for

every life. He will lead us into it, and then lead us *in* it, step by step. He made man's home before He made man. In the simple Genesis record He planned the man, of what sort he should be and what service he should do, before He made him. He planned the best, for He made him in His own image. He gave Himself, His breath, to insure that likeness, and later gave Himself again, His blood, to restore it. He planned a new trinity in making man, Himself and the man and the woman, for perfection of friendship requires three; and man was made for fulness of friendship with God. Every one needs two friends, one above to draw him up, and one alongside to draw him out—so God planned.

God has a plan thought out for the universe, and for our planet, and for each man upon it. The great emergency that sin has made in the world called for special planning. It controls much of His planning for our lives. He knows that emergency as no one else. He feels the keenness and stress of it beyond any other. He knows each man of us, our gifts and endowments, what we can do, and do best. He loves each of us devotedly. The ambition of love is in His planning. He has great wisdom. His plan is best for all the world, and for each man.

The life of the great Hebrew pioneer Abram clearly was thought out,[1] and as clearly that of his lineal descendant, the great law-giver,[2] and that

[1] Genesis 12:1 and on. [2] Exodus 2 and 3.

of *his* immediate successor, Joshua.[1] It was the consciousness that he was filling out God's plan for himself that held Jeremiah so steady to his difficult and thankless, dangerous task.[2] Paul, the man to whom we Gentile foreigners owe so much, had no doubt of this in his own life;[3] and he plainly set it down as a law of God's dealing with men.[4] The greater includes the less. God has no favorites. Every man's life is planned.

Every man should plan to live a planned life, *the* planned life, planned by Another. Every man may. He is touching the very tip-top of human achievement who comes nearest to fitting into the plan thought out for him. This glorifies every life, no matter how lowly, or in how hidden away a corner; for the touch of God's plan is upon it. It dignifies one's life; it has been thought out by a *God!*

> "There is a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them how we may."

And that divine One will shape everything towards the end He has planned, if He may have our consent.

This is the working basis of the whole problem of guidance. It simplifies it much. It is not coaxing a friendly God to keep us along a path we have marked out for ourselves. It is finding and fitting into the plan lovingly thought out for us, and doing the service assigned to us in the

[1] Numbers 27:18 and on.
[2] Jeremiah 1:4 and on.
[3] Acts 13:2 and on.
[4] I Corinthians 12:11, 18.

great world-plan. Guidance is a matter of finding God's plan and following it faithfully step by step. A man should aim to have a keen understanding of what God's plan for him is.[1] The likeness of God imprinted upon him puts him under obligation to find out the plan of God intended for him.

The first great question for every one is whether he is going to go God's way, and to plan to fit into God's plan. The real stiff work in the problem of guidance is here. This must be settled first of all, and then kept settled. It can easily be settled, and it can be kept settled. Yet almost every man of us is bothered with either one or the other of those two things. But if a man will do this part of the sum up, the figuring out of the rest is assured; and more, it isn't hard. Let it once be fixed that a man's one ambition is to fit into God's plan for him, and he has a North Star ever in sight to guide him steadily over any sea, however shoreless it seem. He has a compass that points true in the thickest fog and fiercest storm, and regardless of magnetic rocks.

God Tells us His Plan for us.

God reveals his plan to a man. Of course He does. He naturally would if He expected a man to follow it. He has to tell it if we are to know it. He does tell it, and tells it in the plainest way. This is the second great factor in guidance. He not only reveals the plan to follow, and the path

[1] Ephesians 5:15-17.

to tread, but he is eager to do it. He takes every man into His confidence regarding the plan for his life. But His great trouble is to get our attention so He can tell us.

Ever since man lost the vision of God's face in Eden, and the sound of His voice, God has had to do unusual things to attract man's attention, and get him to understand His plan, and hold him to it. Our spirit-senses are dulled by sin. Something startling must frequently be used. The strange sight of a bush all aflame yet not burnt up takes hold of Moses' scholarly temperament, and holds him quiet enough to hear the Voice and the plan.

A fire eating up the meal that Gideon had prepared for his pilgrim guest tells that startled man of God's unsuspected presence, and secures his splendid leadership in His plan. A vision of overwhelming glory led Isaiah into the deeper devotion that changed his spirit and his career. As extreme a measure as laming his body is used to waken up the scheming Jacob, for he has a will strong enough to be stubborn, but not yet strong enough to yield. A vision with features utterly repugnant to the hungry Peter tells him of God's plan for his outside, outcast brothers. For Paul, light so bright as to make the sun's light cast a shadow, and so blinding as to shut his outer eyes for days, that so the inner light might be lit, and the plan be seen. And later, a needle-pointed thorn ever prodding, but softened with a wondrous Presence, to hold Paul to the plan.

If something has come to you that seems very strange and unexplainable, better hold very quiet and still—God is probably trying to get your ear. He is talking; if you give your attention you will hear something. He needs some help; there is something to be done; he wants you to give Him a hand, a lift, a life-lift. He is trying to attract your attention. If you give it and fall in heartily with his plan, you will understand what He has been doing, and when the thing that hurts has done its work it will likely be taken away.

He reveals the general plan at once, but the steps in it only one at a time. He wants to keep us in touch all the time.[1] His plan needs two at each stage, Himself and you. We need to be trained to keep His pace. We are apt either to dash ahead or to lag behind. Both bother the plans. There is a fascination in noting how such strong men as Abraham[2] and Joshua[3] were told a step at a time what to do. As one step was taken the next became clear, and, that taken, cleared the next. Steady walking takes most strength. Some of us are good at a dashy eagle-flight up, or a quick spurt down the road, but we have not learned the walk-step yet.[4]

Accepting God's Plan.

How may we know God's plan for us? No question has been asked more often, nor more

[1] Genesis 22:2; Matthew 2:13.

[2] Genesis 12:1, 4 with 7; 17:9, 10 with 23, and 18:1.

[3] Note first ten chapters of Joshua. [4] Isaiah 40:31.

earnestly than just this—"May I know certainly what God's plan for me is?" And the deep glow of fire in the eye tells eloquently of the eager desire of the heart. Yes, surely we may know, and may know surely. He that is willing to do may know, and will know. The life-plan that has been thought out may be known, and there may be, too, the steady going along in the plan step by step without breaks. A man needn't even stub his toe, much less fall down.

The first essential to knowing God's plan is *meekness*. That simply means accepting Somebody's else plan for the life. Meekness is not weakness; it is strength using its strength in deliberately yielding to a higher will. Moses is called the meekest man because he yielded so fully and constantly to Somebody's else plan. He might have been the Pharaoh of the world's leading nation, but he chose to ally himself with a race of ex-slaves because that was Somebody's else plan for him. And the spirit of that choice pervaded his whole life.

Jesus was not the meekest man. He was meekness personified. The word gets a new fineness of meaning from His life. He might have swayed Athens and Corinth, the centres of the world's philosophies, with His philosophy of life, but He chose rather to teach the poor, for that was Another's plan for Him. He might have held in His steady grasp the reins of a new earthly government stronger than that of Rome, but He chose rather to win the government of men's

hearts, for that was Another's plan for those human years.

He might have been the centre of the highest social circles of beautiful, cultured Antioch-on-the-Orontes, but He chose to grace and sweeten with His presence the homes of the lowly, for so His Father wished. His voice could have been used to give out music that would have classed Him as the world's greatest musician, but he chose to sing to babes, and to women and men tired out under heavy loads, for that was Another's plan.

Those fingers of His could have chiselled marble and touched canvas into a life far beyond what marble and canvas have ever known, but He used them in ministering to sick and needy and tired-out folks, for so it had been planned for Him. He came to carry out the plan of Another. That was the great meekness of His great strength.

This quality of meekness lies at the very root of guidance. It makes the road simple and straight. The man eager to do what God wants done will know certainly what to do.[1] This is a family trait, by which the sons of the King may be recognized.[2] Those in the inner family circle of God have a fine passion for doing what He wants done.

The second great essential in knowing God's plan is *obedience*. This is really saying the first thing over again. Obedience is meekness; it is meekness in action, in daily use. Obedience is practising meekness. It makes meekness effective.

[1] Psalm 25:9. [2] Romans 8:14.

Meekness is accepting the plan; obedience is working it out bit by bit. Meekness is the attitude of one's spirit towards God; obedience is the doing of the things He wants done.

A Disciplined Judgment.

There is a third essential of immense importance, and that is, *listening to God.* God is telling us the plan, and telling us the next step to take, but our ears bother us; they are so dull. It is amazing how many deaf children there are in God's family. The deafness seems to grow with the years too. For usually the child-ear—whether a child in years, or in religious experience—is keen, though it needs training. There is nothing so necessary as keen, trained ears. Yet there seems to be nothing rarer. An endless amount of doubt and difficulty in guidance can be traced back to this critical point.

The favorite word for listening in the Bible is the word *waiting.* It is a great word full of simple yet wondrous meaning. It means the turning of the face full up to God so as to know *by a look* what He would suggest; hearing through the eyes. It is exquisitely put in the Psalms. God assures us that He is ever keeping His eye upon us so that by our looking up we can catch His eye and so know what to do.[1]

It means on our side watching God's slightest movement as intensely as a slave in those old times watched for the first and least suggestion of the

[1] Psalm 32:8.

master's desire.[1] As the watch-guard on night duty upon the city wall in old Judea kept his eyes keenly towards the east to see the first gleam of the coming day that would relieve his long, lonely vigil[2]—so intensely and keenly we are to look towards God to get the first inkling of His will. The life is to be lived with its face always turned to God.

But this can be put in a very homely, matter-of-fact way that may help yet more. There are three things given us for guidance, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, and our own sense, or reasoning powers, our judgment. These three are meant to agree. When they do agree in one the way is surely clear. When they do not agree, the only wise thing to do is to do nothing, to wait till they do agree. Usually the judgment is amiss and needs straightening up to the other two.

The Word of God read habitually disciplines the judgment. There comes to be a settled conviction as to God's character and preferences and ways of working. There comes, too, a keener use of one's thinking powers. The Spirit of God within makes plain the meaning of the Word, and adapts it to our needs in a very wonderful way. With the Book of God in his hands in good plain type, and the Spirit of God in his heart, and the common sense with which we are all endowed, no man need be in doubt when acting time comes, nor make any mis-steps. And this is said with keen consciousness of many a slip.

[1] Psalm 123: 1-2. [2] Psalm 130: 5, 6.

The great sheet-anchor bit in the old Book is in the Twenty-fifth Psalm: "The meek will He guide in judgment"; that is, in his mental processes. The American Revision uses the word "justice" in place of "judgment"; but the reference clearly is to being just in one's decisions. Judgment is used in the sense of a decision. Here is the great simple promise regarding the process of guidance.

As I sift over the facts and circumstances that bear upon the decision, I must make the Spirit of God's will guide my thinking. He will help me to see colorlessly, to weigh accurately, and to reach a right conclusion. This is putting guidance on the highest plane. God uses the thinking powers He has given us. They need the discipline of His Word, of His Spirit's indwelling, and of *use*. Questions of right and wrong are decided by the statements of the Word. Questions of what best to do are decided by the judgment, disciplined by the Word, and guided by the Spirit.

Through habitual reading of the Word of God, in reverent dependence upon the Holy Spirit, for the purpose of learning God's will, there comes gradually to be a disciplined judgment, a simple common sense in weighing and deciding what best to do. There seems to be nothing much rarer nor scarcer than this. The personal coloring and preferences and advantages get in so strong that they twist the eyesight badly.

The passion for God's plan is the great counteractant for the undue personal element. The

steady, burning passion to do His will makes one forget all else, and yet makes him fit eagerly in where service is called for, but with no sense of having done some great thing even when he has. He is absorbed in some One else through whose power the thing was accomplished, and whose glory is the one dominant thought.

Unhurried Waiting.

All of this is in that Twenty-fifth Psalm, the great guidance Psalm. It is written in the midst of difficulties and sore temptations. It should be studied much by the man seeking to understand guidance. It begins with oft-repeated prayer for guidance that reveals an earnest heart-desire to go God's way. The praying stirs the memory of this man writing to the fact that he hasn't always chosen God's way, but preferred his own. It is the meek man who reverently "fears the Lord" who is guided and taught about the way to go. The path pointed out is not only the right one, but proves to be a loving one for him who is obedient, "unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." This meek, obedient man waits on God; he is in the spirit of constant listening. And he is guided in thinking out his decisions. He is instructed in the way to choose. God does the instructing; the man does the choosing; he is helped in his mental processes. The result specified is two-fold, great peace, his soul dwelling at ease; and power or good success, his seed inheriting the land.

Then comes the great statement that the friendship of the Lord, the exchange of confidences, is given to such men, "and He will show them His covenant"; that is, what He has planned to do, and then the plans actually carried out. And the man writing emphasizes the true spirit that brings all this—"*mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.*" Such a man will know surely how to go, and will have strength to go when the way is hard, and, more, will find the road to lead him into far more of blessing than he had ever thought of.

The man who so waits upon God never decides anything hurriedly. His friends are likely to think him slow perhaps. He *is* unhurried. He may decide quickly sometimes, but that is because he has been brewing in secret over all the considerations. He is never hurried nor flurried. It is often hard to wait. Our natural impatience and our tired-out nerves prod us on when we should wait. It is always safe to wait. With the greatest need unmet, the keenest crises impending, it is safest to wait till we're clear; that is, clear as to the next thing to do; and the next thing to do is always clear in time to do it.

And yet more: this man who waits on God is so intent on getting God's plan done that he is not concerned about anything else. The plan he is in the process of shaping up may *fail*. But that will not concern him, for clearly it was not God's plan if under faithful attention it fails. Personal pride to have a plan carried through doesn't bother him a bit; he cares only to carry

through Somebody's else plan. Yet when the plan is clearly revealed, or clearly proves bit by bit to be the plan of the Master, he holds to it with a peculiar tenacity. And, as a matter of fact, the plan carefully decided upon in such a way doesn't fail. God is eager to reveal His plan, and He does to the man eager to know. The meek man is guided surely in his planning.

There is a fine word from Luke's pen describing the decision to go to Europe the morning after Paul's vision of the Macedonia man. Luke had joined Paul. Paul tells him his vision. "Straightway," he writes, "we sought to go forth into Macedonia, *concluding* that God had called us to preach the Gospel to them."[1] The old version says, "assuredly gathering" in place of "concluding." The word underneath suggests a putting together of this and that, and so drawing an inference. It describes the common process of thinking a thing out. In this case the evidence was very clear, but the word used for the thinking and talking it over is very helpful. They were being guided in their mental processes. God's law of progress is to take the next logical step. But one should not take a step when in doubt about its being the right one.

Guided in Judgment.

A drop of wine gives the flavor of the cask. A simple straw will show the direction of the wind. Very simple occurrences sometimes re-

[1] Acts 16: 10, American Revision.

veal how God guides. Some very simple instances of this sort came to my attention recently. A woman who has a flock of poultry to attend noticed one morning that a brood of very young Plymouth Rocks were not well. They seemed droopy and distressed. She had been caring for them thoughtfully, and could not make out the cause of their distress. The thermometer in the brooder where the little ones made their home indicated a proper temperature. Her womanly heart was moved with pity for them. As she stood watching, perplexed, she thought of how God must look down and pity too, and leaning against the corner of the hen-house quietly prayed to be shown the difficulty. At once it occurred to her to examine the heating lamp in the brooder. It proved to need a larger burner to make enough heat; the thermometer was not registering accurately. The change was quickly made, the temperature rose, and the little chicks were soon happy and contented.

A business man of Belfast, well known in that city, told this bit of his experience to a group of men in the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting room one noon. He is a builder, and recognized as an expert in that business. He had been called to examine a large building which was being seriously shaken and jarred by the motion of the machinery. Efforts had been made to find why the machinery shook the building so, but they failed to reveal the defect in construction. He was called in as an expert. He examined the build-

ing most thoroughly, but could find no faulty place. It was one of the best constructed buildings he had ever examined, he said. He was much puzzled to know where the defect could be, and felt quite nonplussed.

As he stood looking in his perplexity, he sent up a softly breathed prayer to be shown where the trouble was. At once his thought went to a certain large post or beam on which part of the machinery rested. He went on to notice that it was not properly adjusted. There was plainly the cause of the violent jarring of the building by the machinery. Yet he had gone painstakingly over the whole structure without finding it, as had other experts. The defect was pointed out and remedied, and all jarring ceased. Could there be simpler and yet more direct illustrations of the old bit, "The meek will He guide in his mental processes?"

A small group of young men entrusted with the supervision of one of the great religious activities among young men were spending a day in conference and prayer. Men were to be chosen for certain very important positions. A mistake in choosing would have very serious results. They talked over the men in mind and their suitability to the tasks involved, and prayed together. A decision was reached about certain men, but reached tentatively, not decisively, not finally. The suggestion was made that they separate, and pray and think separately, and then come together again. The matter was so

serious that there must be no mis-step or mistake. They did so, and while in prayer alone the conviction came that it would not be best to send a certain man tentatively decided upon for a certain post. More prayer and conference followed, and the arrangements were readjusted.

So were these men guided in their mental processes. So were they guided to plan out unhurriedly with utmost thoroughness their serious task. These men were keen Bible students, with discipline of judgment much above the average, and with a rare openness of mind to the suggestions of God's Spirit, as a result of long habit. Here was the habit into which they had been led through long experience, of being guided by the Spirit through their trained thinking powers. The withdrawal from each other's presence made them more susceptible to the presence of the One whose will they were bent on doing.

The Boys and the Tramps.

The Spirit of God adapts the words of the Bible to our needs with a simplicity that is winsome. He constantly breathes through and out of these pages, these old narrations, and verses, and sentences. He takes these words and speaks them with an inaudible but very distinct voice into one's mind. He gives them a precious meaning that fits wondrously and warmly into our needs. So it comes to pass that a passage will have a warm personal meaning fitting into some experience of

one's life quite in addition to its first historical meaning.

It is a bit of the versatility of Scripture that its words have both a historical and a philosophical meaning. As originally spoken they tell perhaps of some story in a certain man's life, and then the words so spoken and written are found to have a deeply simple philosophy that applies directly to life to-day. This strikingly brings out the fact that the Scriptures answer a double purpose. There is the first purpose for which they were written centuries ago, and then a present purpose in fitting into and helping our changing, daily needs, and adapted to each man's reading. Surely this old Book *is* inspired; it is inbreathed with a living Spirit. There is a living presence in it fitting its words with a warm, living touch to every man and every circumstance.

I had an illustration of this one summer in a New England village. I had gone to the prayer meeting in the old white-painted Congregational church. The subject was Bible study. In the social mingling afterwards a quiet little woman said to me, "I would like to tell you of a verse that helped me greatly one time." And I listened. I seemed to know at once that I was to get something. I was standing close up to a sacred human life, and was to be allowed to look in. I listened reverently and eagerly.

Her story was a simple one. She lived on the edge of town, with the neighbors not very close. Her husband's business took him away much of

the time. This bit of experience came the previous winter. She enjoyed the weekly prayer meeting and always planned to attend. Yet she knew, as she returned home from prayer meeting, that there was sure to be at least one tramp, and maybe more, taking a night's lodging in the barn back of the house. She was alone in the house so far as having a man who might protect her was concerned. Naturally enough that made her nervous and worried her. She prayed, and tried to be brave, but could not seem to quite shake off the timid worrying about it.

At that same time the superintendent of the Sunday School had asked her to teach a class of boys. She had declined. She felt that she had no gift for teaching, and that she could not do it. But he gently persisted; he was sure she could; he needed a teacher for those boys; it seemed so hard to find one; would she not think it over and pray about it before finally deciding? And she had rather reluctantly agreed to this. These were the two things uppermost in her mind at this time, the danger threatening from the tramps, and the teaching of the boys.

Her habit was to spend a little while each morning with the Bible, reading and praying. This morning of which she told me her regular course of reading brought her to the fifty-first chapter of Isaiah. She was reading along in a meditative, unhurried way, praying softly as she read, and with those two things, the tramps and the boys, within easy reach in her underneath thoughts.

She came to the sixteenth verse. "And," she said to me, "the first line of that verse seemed to stand out as though in bigger type: '*I have put my words in thy mouth.*'" Clearly that meant the boys. She grew quiet and still. The Master was speaking to her. She sat thinking about the class, with the feeling of hesitancy not wholly gone, and yet the decision clearly made. She would teach the boys the best she could, and *He* would be giving her the words.

After a little prayer, still thinking about the boys, her eyes turned half mechanically to the page to continue the reading. "Then," she said to me, with a moistened glow in her eyes, "the next line stood out big just as the first had done: '*And have covered thee in the shadow of mine hand.*'" That meant the tramps. It seemed to her that the wondrous Spirit had taken these words, centuries old, spoken originally to the distressed nation of Israel, and had with a wholly new, tender meaning spoken them into her heart in her need. And I felt sure, and feel sure, that she was right. And the order in which the message came seemed peculiarly helpful. First came the bit about the service needed from her, and as quickly as she responded to that call came the word of comfort for her personal needs.

Instructed in the Night Seasons.

The habit into which I have grown in making decisions, even about smaller matters, is to gather up all the information on the matter, thresh it out

and sift it over into the clearest shape possible, pray over it, be content to have it go either way regardless of personal preferences, and then sleep over it. In the morning hour alone I am apt to know pretty clearly what to do. If not quite clear I wait a while longer, including sometimes more than one night's sleep. The sleep induces a quietness in which the thing assumes clear shape.

Then, too, there is a statement of the old Book that seems to me to fit in here, though I know well that some may think the interpretation of it rather fanciful. "So he giveth unto his beloved sleep"[1] is the reading of both old and revised versions. But the margin gives this alternate reading: "So he giveth unto his beloved *in* sleep." I do not say that this is the first meaning of that tender old bit of the Book. I do not know. But I recall how He gives bodily strength in sleep, and has turned the tide of sickness and weakness in sleep, and I recall, too, that in the Old Testament times He used to reveal His plan to men in their sleep.

The man who proved to be God's messenger to Job told that troubled man this:

> "God speaketh once,
> Yea twice, though man regardeth it not,
> In a dream, in a vision of the night,
> When deep sleep falleth upon men,
> In slumberings upon the bed;
> Then he openeth the ears of men,
> And sealeth their instruction."[2]

[1] Psalm 127: 2. [2] Job 33: 14-18.

And the sixteenth Psalm has this:

"I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel;
Yea, my heart instructeth me in the night seasons."[1]

I am not speaking of dreams, but only of this—that through the perfectly natural channel of the thoughts, He gives in sleep that which guides us when awake. There is here no element of the supernatural involved. Through nature's duly appointed channels, the mental processes, God in a time of greatest stillness clears the thinking and suggests what to do.

Finding the Life-plan.

The great question of finding out the *life-plan* has puzzled a great many, and should have a special word here. The fact that there is a life-plan for every one, and that God is naturally eager to tell it so that it may be carried out, clears the ground very much. The man who wants to know can know, without any doubt. Hundreds of young people are facing the question of giving their lives to the great, needy, foreign mission fields. There, without any question, is the greatest need, and there too is the greatest privilege of service. And in addition to that are the great home mission fields, and the church ministry. In our day there is a great call for many sorts of workers in addition to the ordained ministry.

The general plan for all followers of Jesus is that they shall go. The general marching orders

[1] Psalm 16:7.

to all who hear His voice are a plain, imperative "Go." The early disciples so understood and went. In foreign mission lands there is a spirit akin to that of these early disciples. In Korea to-day they are going everywhere in the same way. Whenever there is a spirit of awakening in the Church there is always a spirit of awakening to this ringing call to go. Whenever the Spirit of God gets sway in a man's life, among the other marked characteristics, is a new, yearning earnestness to take the message of Jesus to the far-off peoples who have had no word of it.

But in addition to the general marching order is the particular personal order. The Master has made plain His plan for His Church; it is to *go*. He makes plain His plan for each member of His Church *where* he is to go. The whole scheme is mapped out by the Lord of the harvest, and each one's place in the scheme, too. And while all may go in a very real sense to those neediest fields by prayer and money and earnest sentiment-making, some are not to go there personally, but to stay here. The great thing is to be where the Master has planned.

How shall a man know that plan for himself? He should aim to gather all available information, weigh and balance it carefully, and wait quietly upon God, both in prayer and in the spirit of his life, with a full, eager willingness to go far or stay near, to be wholly in religious service or a volunteer with other duties, as the plan may be. He that is willing to go shall know. He should

inform himself about the great world-fields. That is very easily done to-day. The Student Volunteer Movement and the Young People's Movement have brought the information close home in very easy shape.

He ought to think about his own abilities and special gifts. These gifts and talents are gifts from God, and so a trust. One should think soberly of what he can do, and cannot do, that he may know his responsibility, and meet it. Some sensible friend or two, sympathetic with you and with the needs, can be of real service here, to help you get an impartial view, while the decision must rest with yourself. The circumstances of one's life must be considered, and the home responsibilities. I know a young man who burned with the desire to go to a foreign field. But it was very plain to him that he should not leave home; he was needed there. There was a deep twinge of regret as the situation cleared to him; but no element of doubt. Clearly it was so planned for him. And he has since been used graciously in every mission land while yet remaining home. That is the story of very many who have discerned clearly the plan, and gladly fitted into it.

All this one should gather up: facts about the world-need; about himself, with friends to help get the undue personal coloring out; about his circumstances; and the strong inward impulse. These should be sifted and weighed unhurriedly, and balanced, and time spent in quiet prayer

alone with God over His word. So a man will come to know with the certainty that steadies all his coming service. And he will always know in time. But he must not be hurried; he may decide quickly but he must not decide hurriedly.

"My Sheep Hear My Voice."

There are some snags in these waters to be looked out for, and avoided. Some terrible mistakes have been made by those who said they had heard the voice of God, and were doing as He had bid. I am not speaking now of those who have done insane things under such a delusion. But godly, well-equipped men, earnest and whole hearted in their devotion, have made pitiable mistakes that have sadly blighted both life and service.

Sometimes a failure to obey in some matter, a break with God, a getting out of touch, a bit of sin not fixed up at once but persisted in, has led to the unwise step, and a wrecked career of service. We are made of such inflammable, catchy stuff that we must fight shy of the fires of passion and of pride, and live very close to God, with a constant cleansing from defilement, if we are to go straight.

And sometimes where no such thing comes in there is a plain slip in judgment, with sad results. The records of service are full of those who have been led away from the middle road to side paths not meant to be trodden. God is no longer able to use them. The switching from the road has

meant a switching from service. Paul was constantly on the watch lest after having been used of God he should have to be laid aside as no longer serviceable.[1]

Mark keenly that the tempter is a great imitator. He is a mighty actor, skilful in impersonating God. He follows God as closely as he can. There is a fascination in running through the Bible, especially the book of Revelation, and noting the imitations of the evil one. There is a voice of God, and there is a voice that is not God's but sometimes mistaken for His. There is need of constant watchful care. Yet one may be sure. The Master said, "My sheep hear my voice";[2] that is, they *recognize* it. The actual sheep in that land are very keen and quick to recognize their own master's voice. That sheep simile is immensely helpful here. *The sheep live with the shepherd.* It is by long daily intimacy with him that they know him so well.

So with us. By the intimacy of daily contact with God, by the intimacy of knowledge with His Book, one may come to recognize unerringly His voice, and by the cultivation of a quiet spirit one grows keener to know that voice, for it is a voice of great, still quietness. There is a Voice of God as well as a Book of God. God speaks by the voice of the Spirit to a man's inner spirit. He is apt to speak in the words of the Book. Sometimes He speaks otherwise. And when He does it is always in accord with the Book, of course; the

[1] I. Corinthians 9: 27. [2] John 10: 27.

voice of God agrees with itself. He never speaks contrary to the Book nor to the spirit of it.

Having asked for guidance and reached your decision, never look back and question your guidance. If indeed it be clear that you have not waited quietly enough, and have not heard distinctly, and made a decision unwisely, of course it must be changed. But when you have waited and listened and not hurried, and come to a decision, then refuse to question it. Push quietly on. There is a teasing, nagging indecision that whips back and forth over a matter already disposed of. It often comes from worn-out nerves. Good sound sleep, and plenty of fresh air, and plain food thoroughly chewed, would dispel many of the distracting, confusing thoughts that come racing in like staghounds to bother us. They would help us to hold steady mentally, and to know the thing to do. Sometimes this indecision lies deeper down than a tired body, and is a mental trait to be chastened and disciplined.

A will bended to God's, a spirit of obedience to His wishes, the Book kept open, the cultivation of the Spirit's friendship, time alone with the Book daily, a habit of *wide* reading of its pages, a quiet, unhurried spirit—these simple, great things lead to the disciplined judgment and sensitive spirit that know what to do and make no slips.

"Thou sweet, beloved will of God,
My anchor-ground, my fortress hill,
My spirit's silent fair abode:
In thee I hide me and am still.

Upon God's will I lay me down
As child upon its mother's breast;
No silken couch, nor softest bed
Could ever give me such sweet rest.

Thy wonderful grand will, my God,
With triumph now I make it mine;
And love shall cry a joyous 'yes'
To every dear command of thine.

Thy beautiful sweet will, my God,
Holds fast in its sublime embrace
My captive will, a gladsome bird
Prisoned in such a realm of grace.

Within this place of certain good
Love evermore expands her wings;
Or, nestling in thy perfect choice,
Abides content with what it brings;

A sweetest burden, lightest yoke,
It lifts, it bears my happy soul;
It giveth wings to this poor heart;
My freedom is thy grand control."[1]

[1] Madame Guyon.

THE PROBLEM OF THE CHURCH

Some Wrong Ideas.

The Tie of Blood and Spirit.

A Picture of the True Family.

Fellowship and Service.

Great Church-names Sign-posts of Man's Growth.

A New Church Unity.

The True Church Spirit.

The Problem of the Church

Some Wrong Ideas.

"Are you a member of Church?" I was asked by an earnest Christian woman recently. It was at a conference of Christian people for speaking about Jesus and the great truths of Christian life and service. She is a gifted woman, earnest in her spirit of devotion and service. "Yes," I replied, with a bit of wonder at the question, "I certainly am; I am a member of the Church in which I was born and reared."

"But," she went on, "how can you be? Are there not many things there of which you do not approve, and things taught that you do not believe?" I reminded her that church membership was not a matter of approving everything that was done, nor yet a matter of believing certain things. It is the gathering together of those who believe in Jesus Christ, and gather in His name for mutual helpfulness, and for a great world-service.

It is because I seem to have met many whose thought of the Church has not been clear, and who have wavered in their devotion to it, that I want to talk a bit here about the Church, and our personal relation to it. This is one of the per-

sonal problems that comes up in the life of very many who would climb the highest levels, and always ring true.

There have been a good many common mistakes current in thinking about the Church. It is supposed by some that church membership necessitates a belief in all the items of her creeds; by others that it is a sort of profession of peculiar goodness or sanctity; and by others that it is largely for one's own helpfulness and enjoyment. The personality of the minister has entered in to a very large degree, and very naturally. That must always have influence. The Church has sometimes, in some quarters, been thought of practically as an exclusive club to which non-members are not welcome without a personal introduction by a member in acceptable standing. It has been thought of, too, as the doorway into desirable social circles, and some very earnest, Bible-loving people have thought of it wholly as a place to be fed and fired up.

And let it be frankly said that there has been and is much in various quarters to give coloring to these various suppositions. Yet the simple thought of the purpose of the Church is quite different from any of these ideas. It will surely help, to get some clear thought of the mission of the Church, and of one's true relation to it.

The Tie of Blood and Spirit.

The Church is a family, God's family. It is common blood that makes a family. The child

comes into the family through the blood of the parents. In quite another sense it can be said it is one blood that makes the church family. Through the blood of the Head of this family there comes the life to each one, and that life it is that makes him a member of the family.

The Church is not an organization formed by men for an agreed purpose. It is a society founded by the Holy Spirit for a great purpose. Its members belong there only because the Spirit of the Founder is in them. Each one into whom the Spirit has come is a member of the society because of that fact. The Holy Spirit is the bond of union that holds the members together. As they are drawn closer to Him they are drawn closer to each other.

Membership in a family is by birth. The child comes into the family by birth; he comes into the church family by birth too, the higher spirit-birth. The child has his father's spirit and in some degree his likeness. The member of the church family has *his* Father's spirit, and in some degree His likeness. Wherever there is a heart that has opened to the gracious Spirit of God there is a member of His family. For He quickly enters every such heart and His presence is the certificate of membership in His family, the Church.

The members of this family meet with the Head of the family, of course. Getting together is a family trait. The Spirit in each draws them together. They meet out of love for their Father. They love to tell Him of their love for Him, and

to express their feelings of regard. The common word for this is worship. They meet to read their Father's letters, and to talk about Him and His plans and wishes. Such meetings naturally bring a glow of warmth to the heart, clearer thought of His wishes to the mind, and a keener edge to the desire to please Him. They meet, too, to plan how best to win the other children of the Father who have strayed away from the home circle, and lost many of the old family traits. The Father's letters constantly talk about going out for the others, and going to those farthest away and telling them of His yearning love for them.

For this church family is a sort of reunited family. The old original family was badly broken up and scattered. The Father sent down His Son to get them back and together again. It was a great, difficult task. He lost His life on the errand, but He succeeded in the task. Some came, and more, and many more. But the Father's heart is very hungry for the rest. He is ever calling them back. His Spirit in a man is ever urging that man to get the rest back, too, into the inner circle again.

As the members of the reunited family are scattered in all parts of the world, these meetings are held in different places. For convenience and mutual helpfulness, different branches of the family have been organized. Men have been drawn together by national ties, language ties, neighborhood ties, and by ties of friendship. Personal temperament has been a great tie.

Some prefer to give full expression to their feelings; others find a freeness of expression in spirit through quiet meetings.

By agreement and by growth the great branches have been built up with certain statements of belief, and certain forms of management and of worship. All this has played an important part and still does. But these varying outer forms are incidental. They are a convenience for the mutual working together of men in a common plan of work. The vital bond of all is the Holy Spirit's presence. He is the great dominant factor, and the one element of unity in the whole, and of continuity through all time.

A Picture of the True Family.

Through the long years this church family has grown very large, and become very widely scattered over the earth. Its members are different in many ways. They speak many languages. Some are rich and some poor, some educated and some ignorant, with all degrees between. And sometimes differences of opinion have occurred. That is not surprising, considering the great differences of other sorts. And sometimes, it must be confessed, bad disputes have broken out. The very success attending the effort to bring in all others has led indirectly to things of this sort. For these men are not all perfect in love, nor in mental discipline, nor in self-control.

And so there are many branches of the church

family, with their gatherings conducted in many different ways. There are some members of the great church family, members through the birth-mark of the Spirit's presence in their hearts, who do not attend any of these gatherings. That is always unfortunate, for they cannot help so well in carrying out the Father's plan for the world, and they miss the fellowship and help, and are missed too. And then there are quite a good many who do not have that birth-mark who have come into the membership of these branches. But wherever there is a man in whom the Spirit is he will be drawn to meet the others with that same Spirit. The Spirit of God in a man draws him into contact with the other members of the family.

Now a family is peculiar in this: here are gathered into one, persons of very marked differences. There are extreme differences of age, of maturity, of knowledge, of wisdom, of health and strength, and even of temperament in children of the same parents. The true family is both a school and a hospital; a place of growth, of the disciplining of the powers, and of sweetest friendships; with the zest and stimulus of constant contact, and all pervaded with the atmosphere of unselfish love.

And this is the true conception of the Church, especially of the particular group that is bound together in one place of gathering, by ties of agreement, as well as by the fundamental tie of the Holy Spirit's presence in each. A man does

not enter here because he understands the doctrines and creed of the Church, but that he may understand. He does not come in because he is good, but to become good and better; not because he is in sound health spiritually, but to be helped into spiritual vigor.

The one essential thing is that he has admitted Jesus into his life as Saviour and Master. He does not attend the meetings simply to get, but to give too. His presence in an earnest, devout spirit is a great gift to the gathering. He should not go to get his torch lighted, but to take a lit torch and let it touch other lit torches, that so there may be better light and warmth. He ought to carry a live coal in so that others may be warmed, though he is not conscious of that.

The preaching may not always be to his liking, nor the music; and some people may not be as agreeable as they might be; but these things should be thought of as incidentals to be prayed over or, may be, forgotten. They are important. We cannot help being affected by them. But we should be careful not to let our possible dislike or dissatisfaction affect our conduct or speech. A man should aim to keep his boat in the current, and not let it be swept to one side by little eddies, and maybe get stuck in the mud.

The earnest desire to meet with the other members of the great church family, even though personally unknown, to worship the Father, and listen for a message either outer or inner, and help through gift towards the great world-service of the

Church, will always find a blessing coming into the heart, and a bit of uplift into the life. A man may always find in the church service what he needs.

I have been in all sorts of Churches and church services, in many parts of the world, and have found that it is always possible to get a fresh touch with God. Even amid possible distractions of a strange language, or something uncongenial, there can come the deep, quiet glow into the heart that tells of the Spirit's touch. God meets with the man who goes to the place of worship to be met. There is a blessing waiting for each of us in the gathering together in the church service, and we may get it if we will.

Fellowship and Service.

Man was made for fellowship and service. He was made male and female for mutual help in the maturing of his life, and so greater efficiency in service. Here in the original plan for man lies the plan of the Church. It is a divine institution for the mutual maturing of the life of its members, and for a great service—bearing witness to Jesus Christ before all men. Its birthday was that marvellous day in Jerusalem when the crucified and enthroned Jesus sent down the Holy Spirit upon His waiting disciples. Its beginnings were wholly Jewish, at the Jewish capital, with Jewish members, and in a Jewish atmosphere.

Its mission was a striking resemblance to that of the old Hebrew nation. That nation's great

mission was to preserve the revelation it had received of the true God, and to give it to all the world. The Hebrews were God's preachers to the world of Himself. The Church's mission is to tell all the world of Jesus Christ, His life and death and new life beyond death. The Church is Jesus Christ's preacher to all nations.

The principle of organization of the two is radically different. In the nation there was a birthright membership, in the Church a membership by personal choice; there others could come in by choosing to, and fulfilling the requirements; here *all* come in by choice. In the nation the magnet was Jehovah, and His worship. In the Church the magnet is Jesus Christ, and His sacrifice of love. The Church is the lineal descendant of the Hebrew nation. The nation failed at the greatest crisis of its history, the coming of its King—failed through rejecting Him. The highest revelation entrusted to it was refused. The Church was brought to its birth that that rejected King, accepted as Saviour, might be taken to all men.

There are a good many family traits of the nation in its descendant. That nation was not alway true to its mission. Its leaders were frequently weak and false. It had to be severely chastened. Its light shone very dimly and unsteadily at times. Yet up to the time of the great crisis its mission had been largely fulfilled; everywhere in the civilized world was a knowledge of the true God, and a people worshipping

Him, in the midst of idolatry. Always in its darkest days and saddest plight the true light was kept shining clear and bright by a faithful company. There was the nation within the nation; the inner group true to the national mission while the nation itself was losing sight of its high ideal.

The Church has not always been true to its mission. Yet always there have been those who have kept the fires alive, though sometimes the live coals seemed very few. But always there has been a vitality in the Church, a peculiar quality of real life that has thrown off the bad, broken through the false-work, risen up out of the dead elements, and swung it true to its great mission. They were all sons of the Church who led in the great protesting movement which was as a second birth to it, and to the whole world's life.

The counter Reformation within the mother Church was another evidence of its great vitality. The more recent movements among young men, and young women, and students, and for a renewed missionary campaigning by students and young people and laymen, have all grown up within the circle of its membership; they have drawn their strength from its heart; they are simply new evidences of its vast fertility and resource, equal to any emergency.

It is intensely interesting to note that all the creative factors that enter into our present complex, intense civilization found their birth within

the Church. The mental awakening of the world's life so marked and marvellous in every sphere of life in our day has dated practically from the great Reformation movement. There has been no such mental activity in the nations outside the sphere of the Church's influence. It has been most apparent where the Church's influence has been greatest. The whole modern system of education found a birthplace in its vitality, and is distinctively its child. Here in America peculiarly, in the beginning, the Church built the colleges.

The spirit of robust, aggressive vigor so dominant to-day in all the world was breathed into life by the life of the Church. Church history is the backbone of all history. Other lines break and recede. The Church supplies the one continuous warp into which is woven all the rest. The whole network of benevolent institutions to help the distressed, the hospitals and the asylums of all sorts for caring for the physically and mentally needy, grew up out of its warm heart.

Great Church-names Sign-posts of Man's Growth.

The fact that there are great divisions of the Church has been the subject of much criticism. It is not uncommon to hear the Church spoken of as being "all split up." But these great divisions have, in the main, come about in a very natural way. They have been a natural development historically of man's progress in liberty, and in the development of his mental powers.

They are a great expression of his strength of thought, as well as of his individual temperament, brought into conflict with the autocratic principle of government in both Church and State from which men have so largely broken away.

The first great division was by a geographical line into east and west, Greek and Roman. Underneath that line was a radical difference of temperament between the peoples of the West centering at Rome, and those of the East centering about Constantinople. They had been bound into one empire through the power of the sword. Now they are free to give expression to their individuality. It has been commonly said that that division came about through the dispute over two little Latin words in the creed. But that only revealed the different modes of thought of peoples diverse in temperament, and now free to give expression to their thoughts.

The next division, the great Protestant movement, was an evidence of the new life, both mental and spiritual, of the peoples of Europe. The whole body of Protestant churches to-day tells out the vigor and vitality both of man's life and of the Church. It spells out large the greatest movement of man towards a new intellectual life. The race was catching fire afresh. It was having a new birth.

The varying names within the Protestant Church grew up naturally in different nations. In Germany the personality of the great leader in their midst gave the name Lutheran. Under

the leadership of that very different personality, Calvin, the churches in the Rhine countries from Holland to Switzerland used the name Reformed. In Scotland, always marked peculiarly for its independence and individuality, the name Presbyterian grew up, indicating a form of government radically different from that of the mother Church from which they had broken away. In England the Reformation movement took on national proportions, the King leading in the break, and so a national name was used, the Church of England.

The Methodist Church was a later movement. It is a child of the Church of England, born in its heart. It grew up out of the great awakening among the common people of England under the leadership of John Wesley. Its name is a constant reminder of the power of the Church to reach out to the masses, and, too, of the marvellous power inherent in man to develop new life. The stream of life always cuts new channels.

Others have grown up through adherence to some truth or principle that was not being recognized and emphasized as some men felt that it should be. So the great Baptist Church came into being and was peculiarly strengthened by the various persecutions endured. Many of the smaller church bodies are evidence that the unity of the Church is greater than the differences; for they are made of remnants who have refused to come into a union being effected by the larger number. Their existence reveals the fact that the unity of

the Church has been dominant, though not all-inclusive.

The last hundred years and more have witnessed an unparalleled spreading out of the race over the whole earth, subduing, developing, and organizing, even as the command was given in Eden. The pouring of the hordes of northern barbarians into southern Europe has been spoken of as one of the greatest movements of the race. But it is clear overshadowed, both in the numbers and in the vast changes involved, by the present-day emigration movements. And as the people have gone they have carried with them the church forms and names to which they were accustomed in the home land. So it comes to pass that on American soil can be found about every form of church worship, and management, and name. These differences viewed thus historically do not reveal the weakness of the Church but its strength. They mark a certain stage in its progress. They tell the story of man's vigorous life, and of his devotion to the Church.

The New Church Unity.

And now there is a new movement in church life developing rapidly; a new stage is being entered upon. The immense strides which man has recently made and is making in obeying the divine command to subdue the earth and develop it, are rapidly working out a new family spirit among all the men of all the earth. The unity

of the race is revealing itself afresh. And this is finding expression in the life of the Church.

There has been growing up in the last half-century a remarkable spirit of unity. And now there is a marked and remarkable stretching of eager hands across the dividing lines towards such a unity as Christ prayed for so fervently as He was going away. It can be thoughtfully said that there is to-day a practical unity in the Church deeper and keener, warmer and more sympathetic, than when it bore only one name.

And this is said with full alertness to the differences. But the differences are always less than the likenesses; always less than the one dominant spirit beneath varying names and forms and customs. And in our day the dividing lines are looking towards a point of meeting. These are not straight lines, else they would never meet. They are angled lines, slanting lines, of peoples coming up from different parts of the earth, and they are drawing towards a meeting-point.

We Americans are quite in the habit of thinking of ourselves as the great world-leaders, in aggressiveness and enterprise at least. But our spirit-brothers in Japan and Korea have been ahead of us in their attempt to wipe off the slate the dividing church lines they got from us. And our blood-brothers in Britain are clear ahead here. In Scotland, a land and people as much marked for independence of thought and action as ever the old Greeks were, the coming together of churches within recent years has been

most remarkable. Our Canadian neighbors have joined their Methodist bodies into one, and are now at the still greater task of uniting bodies as different in both doctrine and management as Methodist and Presbyterian and Congregational.

In our own country the United Presbyterian Church in its name tells of a coming together. And movements are in various stages of progress for union on a much wider scale. Blood-brothers of our North and South who differed intensely and sacrificially have come together materially and commercially, fraternally and socially, and have been reaching hands across the line in church life to get together again there. Never since apostolic days has there been so much evidence of the oneness of the Church.

And yet beneath all the movements towards organic union is a spirit of unity far greater than can ever find expression through mere oneness of organization. There has grown up a practical unity in service on the mission field to a large extent, and ever increasing. And at home the practical union of missionary efforts by students, by church boards, and now in this great new laymen's movement, is most inspiring. The Church is one Church in essential spirit, and is in increasing measure becoming one Church in practical service.

Serious mistakes have been made and very serious differences have arisen. These but tell the intensity of feeling regarding matters they

love of strong men who are not perfect either in love, or in knowledge, or in self control.

One group of men has made a statement of what they believed. Their followers have required that all after-comers into their circle shall assent to that statement. Another group in a later generation, under wholly different conditions, with new light, and a new way of expressing its thoughts, has not liked that statement but preferred to make its own. And so there has been friction.

Sometimes earnest men dwelling in the valleys have not been able to look over the hills for the comprehensive view which sees things in true relation to each other. But these very differences, with the factional heat involved, have but spelled out the vigorous vitality of men in robust life. The crowd has looked too much at the differences. But then, crowds usually do that. As a rule the crowd doesn't think. Men differ strongly only about the things they love. The mountain peak of strong life and deep devotion and essential unity of spirit looms high over all differences. We should keep our eyes more upon its noble form.

The True Church Spirit.

In a very large social gathering in London some years ago, two gentlemen were speaking together of church matters. One of them criticised the church differences, and consequently, as he thought, the weakness of the Church. His

friend asserted that these differences were largely on the surface and incidental; that underneath, at heart, there was a great unity among church people on the great essentials of the faith. The critic politely questioned the accuracy of his friend's remark.

At once the churchman called attention to the character of the large company gathered. It was representative of many different churches and of many walks of life. He said: "At my request these people will all bow and reverently repeat the Lord's Prayer as a confession of their common faith." And, securing the attention of all gathered, he explained the little pleasant dispute that had arisen with his friend, and made the request.

Instantly a soft hush fell over the lively company, and with bowed heads, and in a deep, low tone, which suggested a great wealth of suppressed feeling, they repeated reverently the Lord's Prayer. On no other one subject could there have been found such oneness of thought and such a depth of reverence. The subject of loyalty to their sovereign would have revealed as great oneness, but not the underneath depth of reverent feeling called out by loyalty to the higher Sovereign.

The great mission of the Church to remember the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, and to tell all the world earnestly and practically and simply of Him, is being fulfilled to-day on a larger scale than ever before, and in as devoted a

spirit as marked the early band of Jerusalem disciples.

Every true follower of Jesus Christ should be in the fellowship of the Church. He belongs there by birth, his new spirit-birth. The choice of the particular branch where his allegiance shall be given will be affected by family connection and tradition, or friendships, or convenience of location, or the receiving of some special spiritual blessing, or other such consideration. Thoughtful prayer will lead any one in doubt to very definite guidance in his decision.

Where he is led to go he should go heartily. That place becomes holy ground to him. The shoes of his common round of duties, and of cares, will be put off as he enters its doors. Here he will meet the Father, and worship Him, and receive blessing and help from Him direct. Here he will, with his brothers, remember the dying love of Jesus in the simple memorial meal of bread and wine. Here will be the fellowship of kindred spirits through which he will help, and be helped.

Through fellowship here, too, he shall come to understand better the love of Christ; for no one ever fully takes in that great love; it takes all of us together to take hold of that, and realize its depth and strength and tenderness. And here he can best join with his brothers in the great world-service intrusted to the Church of telling all the race about Jesus.

THE PROBLEM OF QUESTIONED THINGS

Glimpses of Real Life.
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The Problem of Questioned Things

Glimpses of Real Life.

A friend took me to luncheon one day. He is a leading member of his church, and prominent in various forms of Christian activity. We ate at a very finely appointed club house. As we were looking over the menu card and deciding upon the items of luncheon, my friend said, in the same tone as when asking about meats, "Will you have some beer?" I said quietly, "No, I believe not," not supposing that he was speaking seriously. But as I glanced over at him he seemed as though he actually supposed I might drink that beverage. For a long time I was in doubt as to whether my friend was serious in his question, but, chancing to meet him in a hotel, in another city, dining alone, I knew through my eyes that he had not been indulging in humor in his question.

At another time a young man who was a leader in an organization for aggressive Christian work offered me tickets to a certain performance at the popular theatre of the city, commenting favorably on the merits of the performance. In

response to a question, he said he had found it enjoyable to go sometimes.

I remember vividly the scene one Sabbath night in a large hall in a city in Germany. A very large audience was assembled, including several clergymen sitting upon the platform. It was a union meeting of the churches of the city. Beer was being served throughout the service. And I noted the dexterity with which the waiters could handle a half-dozen large full mugs, make change, and glide quietly about, without disturbing the service by noise. I remember, too, that when one of the speakers gave expression to a pleasing sentiment the young element present began to applaud by hand-clapping, but were instantly checked by a storm of hisses, that ran like a sharp breeze over the hall. Such desecration of the Sabbath day clearly was not permissible.

One Sabbath morning I was startled, on entering the church where I was to speak, to notice in the corner of each pew a spittoon, and then one in the pulpit. These articles were of white china, and so in sharp contrast with the surroundings of walnut and brown furnishings. The color of that which had evidently gone into the spittoon was in such keeping with the general color-scheme of the church as to make quite clear the usage that required them.

One of the leading speakers at a Christian workers' convention was inquiring about what train he could get after the service Sabbath night. He was a very busy man, lived a full

night's ride away, and was eager to be at his desk Monday morning. Another leader present in the group remarked to me afterwards that he would not think of doing such a thing as taking a train on Sabbath night. Yet I knew that he was in the habit of using bottled beer on the score of his health.

A large party of church people were on a trip to a religious gathering. It was a long trip, involving a Sabbath day on the way. The special-train schedule was arranged so as to stop over for that day, and then leave at a few minutes past midnight of the Sabbath day. In a chance exchange of remarks with an engineer who did not know me, he said, with a leering wink of the eye: "These church folks don't travel on Sunday, you know." His tone and manner suggested that he did not think much of the sort of technical Sabbath observance that required him and his crew to use part of their Sabbath day in working.

A Southern clergyman visiting his brother in the North was to attend a certain church service on the Sabbath day. It was some distance away, too far for him to walk; but he did not think it right to use the street cars on that day, and so requested his brother to engage a carriage for his use. The brother did so. Later the brother remarked to me that if he were seen on the street cars on the Sabbath, his friends would know that he was going to the mission he attended every Sabbath; if they saw him in a carriage driving

they would likely suppose, he said, that he was out for a pleasure jaunt.

A young woman, member of a leading church in her home city, teacher in the Sabbath School, and faithful in attendance at the Young People's Meetings, was talking with a friend of mine about card-playing and dancing. She said she thought it was not right for a true Christian to engage in these things, but when she was out in social gatherings, where they were indulged, she would join through dislike of being thought peculiar.

Questions that are Not Questions.

These incidents suggest at once the principal things that are being regarded to-day as questionable things. They suggest, too, the differences of opinion held regarding them by Christian people. Wherever Christian circles and worldly circles touch and overlap and interlace these things are being discussed. It is very striking that everywhere they are called questionable. Though if a thing of this sort be questionable, surely it is not questionable. If some one seriously raises a question about some such matter of conduct, there is surely no question about that item for the man who would touch the highest levels, and always ring true.

Just such questions of propriety and of conscience have always been up for discussion. Ever since Jesus was on earth men have divided themselves into two great groups around Him. For those who have stayed close to Him that line of

division is usually clear, and sharp, and easily seen. For those who travel closer to the line itself, and the people on the other side, it has seemed to be a vague, indistinct line, not easily seen. The folks on the other side of it seem to be raising a good bit of dust and those near by are bothered in their seeing.

Yet, too, let it be said that for many an earnest Christian who would live very close to the Master there arise just such questions of conduct and of conscience that seem very difficult to decide.

The settlement of them is a matter of standpoint. A simple statement of the Christian standpoint helps much to clear away the haze and fog. It has been said in a former talk that the Church is Jesus Christ's preacher to the world. What is true of the Church is true of its members. Each one by his life is Jesus Christ's preacher to his world. Jesus is counting on us. We are the ones upon whom His plan for the world depends, and the only ones. The world knows Jesus through His followers. It knows Him only as it knows His followers.

It is to be feared that some of us are preaching a rather scrappy Gospel, or a very much hidden Gospel. But whatever each follower of His is in his life, that is the impression of Jesus Christ which his circle gets so far as he is concerned. Whatever gives a wrong or weak or obscure impression of Jesus, and of the life He calls us to, clearly belongs outside the Chrisian man's life. Whatever hides Him away should be put out.

We are judged by our attitude towards these questioned things. That outside congregation does not know much about creeds. It doesn't know much about Jesus Christ. It does lay great stress upon conduct, upon what a man does. It judges his belief by what he does, the way he lives. Could there be a keener way? or one more philosophical? For a man literally believes only so much as he actually makes over into life. These questioned things are familiar to these folks. They are not questioned out in their world, but freely indulged. They seem to think a Jesus-man should be different from themselves, in the sense of being better, being guided and held under the strong thumb of a better and higher motive. So that our Christian profession is largely judged by our attitude towards such matters.

Years ago, before the time of railroad consolidation had set in, a certain bit of railroad whose main line was about two hundred miles long, was under the management of a Christian man. He was as much noted in church circles for his earnest, faithful spirit, as he was in railroad circles for his ability as a manager. The road was widely known for three things: its good service, its good dividends, and the fact that there were no Sunday trains. An annual report had just been issued, and the directors had voted the usual good-sized dividend. Referring to it, another railroad manager, in conversation with a group of business men, remarked, "Well, those blank Christians know how to run a railroad." The manager of

that railroad was preaching Christ to all the world by his simple Sabbath observance rule.

The Sabbath Question.

The question of Sunday travel, both on trains and on street cars, has been one of the questioned things, but in many circles seems to be passing outside the line of question. Some who would not think of travelling on a train on the Sabbath use the street cars freely on that day, though the difference is difficult to see, except in the matter of distance and time involved. Some who do not commonly travel on Sunday trains will yet take a train Sabbath night in order to have a full day for business at the journey's end.

In the thick of city life, with its congested population, the long distances involved, the home now out a bit may be, and the church still down where it used to be, with people of limited means getting accommodations where they best can, and also, be it said, with the growing disregard for the hallowed things—in the city it is very difficult to get along without using the street cars. The man trying to help in church services and at missions seems practically compelled to their use. Yet I know a family of limited means, living in a large city, who, on removing the home from one part of the city to another distant part, changed their church membership, breaking old ties in doing so, simply to avoid the Sunday travel.

I know a Christian man whose service for many years has called him to travel much over the country. I have heard him say that in twenty

years of such travel he has never taken a Sunday train, except once in the beginning of his travel, when he missed a connection late on Saturday within a short distance of the place of appointment for the next day. Yet, he said, very deliberately, as though quite clear after much thinking, that the work of that day led him to question very seriously the propriety of his action. And he felt that his influence for the highest standard of the Christian life had been lessened in that place, which was a boom town where Christian standards were loosely held.

He went on to say that he had travelled on the Sabbath a few other times in cases of emergency, once a death call, and a few times taking a train late Sabbath night to reach home on account of serious illness there. This man's matured conviction is that practically it is better to avoid such travel entirely except in distinct emergencies. And I have grown to have great and increasing respect for his judgment. His habit regarding street-car use on that day is to avoid using them. In making appointments he has this in mind. Yet when he feels led to an appointment necessitating a longer distance than he thinks it wise to walk he does not hesitate to use them.

The consideration regarding Sunday travel is wholly a practical one. It is not that such travel is breaking the Sabbath day necessarily. Even the Jews, the greatest sticklers for Sabbath observance on technical grounds, did travel on the Sabbath; travelled much less, but did travel, as the phrase "a Sabbath day's journey" indicates. But

Sunday travel is not a necessity, though in our intense civilization it has come to be so regarded.

The chief objection to it is that thereby men are deprived of their day of rest. That is quite enough of an objection in itself to decide an earnest man. Every man has a right to the rest-day. In being so deprived he distinctly suffers both bodily and spiritually. The tone of his life, and of his home, is lowered. But there is a second great objection. A disregard of the Sabbath day is apt not only to indicate a disregard for other hallowed things, but to *breed* such a disregard. The Sabbath is a sort of safeguard. Once it is broken through, other breaks are apt to come in a man's regard for holy things.

It may seem very radical to say it, yet I am more and more compelled to believe it soberly true that the common Sunday travel and traffic, both mail and freight, are not a necessity, from any standpoint, with the usual saving clause about exceptions and emergencies. In our intense, aggressive civilization it seems that it must be a necessity. Yet it is not. It could all be stopped, and our national life be both stronger and sweeter. The intense drive of the time, the continual railroad accidents, the breakdowns from overwork, all spell out in biggest capital letters the deep philosophy of needed rest that underlies the old Hebrew commandment.

Giving Comfort to the Enemy.

Regarding the theatre, it can be said that without doubt there are some performances, such as

historical plays and others, that are thoroughly enjoyable, and that would not be otherwise than helpful. But clearly these are the exception. The theatre as an institution is not good; more, it is bad. The tone of its performances has been steadily lowering to cater to the sensual appetites, the morbid desire for the sensational. Its representation of life, as a rule, is not true, nor good, nor well balanced. Then it can be added that the worst features of sinful life in the city are constantly fostered and intensified by the theatre.

A man might choose only the exceptional, fine play, and refuse all others. But many of those in his circle who are under the influence of his conduct make no such discrimination. They are younger, it may be, with their character and convictions just in process of being formed. The fact that this man goes influences their going. The chances are all in favor of their choosing the popular play of the hour, or the one that happens to strike the fancy. The chances are still more in favor of their being hurt in their moral lives, not to go higher and say Christian lives.

Cards have long been gamblers' favorite tools. It may not be that the playing of any of the numerous card games has necessarily any influence upon one's thought of gambling. But there does seem practically to be a subtle, sure connection between the two. There is an itch about cards; a contagious itch. The chance of winning something for nothing must be added to give zest to the playing. And the step from a trifling something to something of real value,

and then of great value, seems to be a very short one. And the highly colored glamour of high society casts a spell over all. Gambling itself is not questionable. It is only bad. It is wrong in principle, of course; never right. It would seem the only wise course to leave gamblers' favorite tools to themselves.

The word dancing seems to cover a great variety of physical exercise under greatly different conditions. David danced before the Lord to express his joy at the return of the Ark. The old Scottish dances were used as fine means of development, but were strictly guarded, men with men, and women with women, and never otherwise. What is called the modern dance seems to have radically altered these old regulations.

Many of the common usages of dancing to-day put it quite outside the line for the modest, thoughtful people. Many dancing institutions and centres join hands with the theatres in fostering the worst impurity lurking in city life.

But what about private dancing in one's own home with a chosen circle? Well, the fact that there is a question-mark over the whole custom would seem to answer that question. What is being questioned in morals would far better be left alone. And with this goes the kindred fact that people do not discriminate keenly.

Paul's Advice.

Paul set down a great rule about the appetites. There were many things which he might justify himself in doing, but he said he would not be

brought under the power of anything. Whatever habit brings me under its power, and so lessens my own power, is a bad habit to me. The habit of good, such as prayer, or doing kindness, in bringing me under its power is also increasing my own power of self-mastery. What injures my body is wrong for me.

If the use of tobacco or alcoholic drink in any shape affects the action of the heart, or lessens my staying powers, or unsteadies my nerves, this clearly to me is wrong. And the best physicians, backed abundantly by science, and by constant illustrations from life, have spoken very positively here. In the light of what specialists say it would seem that any indulgence is bad. Sooner or later its effect will be felt in the body and so in the life.

With the conditions of life prevalent to-day there is no question at all regarding strong drink for the man who would be Jesus Christ's *true* preacher to men. Total abstinence is the only safe rule for a sound body, a clear brain, a strong will, and for the influence upon the great crowd of our fellows on a road very slippery and slanting.

The Church of Corinth fairly bristled with questions about matters of conduct. They gave the earnest people there great concern. They concerned Paul very greatly, for these people were his spiritual children, whom he had brought into new life through hard travail. These people write to Paul for advice and help in the perplexity The first nine chapters of his first

epistle to the Corinthians are largely devoted to these matters. Some of the questions raised were about abuses concerning which there was very explicit command from God. Regarding other matters there was no such command, and so Paul is advising them as in his judgment is best. And he feels that he is being guided in his advice by the Spirit of God.

He says that if doing something causes his brother to stumble he will not do that thing while the world stands. The passion of service burned that into his heart. The love for the Master who had sent him to serve was yet greater. The eager longing to win men up to the highest life overruled all his own tastes and preferences.

His controlling principle in settling all such questions was *love;* a tender, intensely practical love for all men. Love is the great test of the Christian life. Knowledge puffeth up; we all know that, and are constantly reminded of it. *Love buildeth up.* We need more of that.

Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient." It is not wrong to do certain things, but it is not best. It is not a question of right and wrong here. That test belongs lower down. Up here it is a matter of doing only what is *best,* and rigidly leaving the rest. Some of these questioned things are not necessarily wrong, but they clearly are *not best.* And if we judge a thing to be wrong then it is wrong for us, for we are doing the thing we think to be wrong. The hurt to the character is as great as though it were wrong.

If the inner Voice has said to me not to do a certain thing, and I do, I break off the intimacy of contact with the One who is wooing me into the inner intimacies of His friendship. I become less sensitive to His voice. The next time I will not hear so easily what He is saying. It does not affect my salvation, of course. But then, who would use the friendship of Jesus as a convenience or as insurance!

If witnessing a play tends to make me get used to sin, and so think lightly of it, or to make impurity less repugnant to me, or to loosen to any degree my hold upon the highest ideals of life, clearly to me it is not good, and so it is positively bad.

There is with many a fear of being thought peculiar. Yet one of the fine, distinguishing marks of Christ's followers is that they are a peculiar people. That does not mean peculiar in an offensive sense, in criticising all who differ with us, nor in setting up standards for others; not peculiar in oddity of habit or expression of opinion; but peculiar in the purity of the life, the lovableness of the spirit, the sweet charity of forbearance and thoughtfulness of others, in modesty of bearing, and in the earnest willingness to help and serve.

But these questions can never be settled satisfactorily by a negative policy. It will not do merely to cut things off from without. They must be *pushed off from within.* Jesus said that when the unclean spirit is cast out of a man he comes back, and if the man is empty within

the outcast spirit secures the co-operation of other spirits and re-enters the empty house, and now holds the man more strongly under his sway than ever. If on returning, he had found in his old place the gracious, mighty spirit of God in possession, he would quietly have slunk away to other haunts.

A man needs a great, absorbing passion to fill and grip and control his being and life. There is the one great passion, that which absorbed Jesus—*love*. That reaches eagerly up to Himself; it reaches quickly within to remove what He doesn't like; it reaches warmly and earnestly out to tell others of Him. This love—Jesus Himself enthroned within—fills one so satisfiedly that things not congenial are crowded out. It lifts one up to such a level that small things are seen in their smallness and so their hold loosens. It drives one with such intensity out into service for men that whatever hinders is stripped quickly off and thrown aside.

Not to Judge but to Save.

There is need of greatest tact in expressing our preferences regarding these things among those who practise them. There has been in earlier generations, and not wholly gone yet, a rigidity of practice in some such things coupled with lack of a loving, earnest, consistent spirit. And the two have become fixed together in many minds. Truth has always suffered at the hands of some defending it.

One should be very careful not to express him-

self in such a way as to seem critical of another. The keenest criticism of wrong is a consistent life. We are not sent to judge the world but to save it. We are not sent to be critics of our neighbors. Each man is to be fully persuaded in his own mind. We are to presume that the other one has thought for himself and reached a conclusion; we should respect his opinions. So that while as occasion needs one should clearly make known his own thought and habit, it should be done with the tactful deference to others that love inspires.

I glean this fine bit from a memorial of Dr. Maltbie D. Babcock, that rarely sainted, sane young minister who so moved the heart of New York the brief year he preached there: "He never hesitated a moment over questions of policy. Like Paul he held tenaciously to the doctrine of Christian liberty. But he had more delight in waiving his use of that liberty than in exercising it, if his use of it might in any way interfere with his usefulness. Knowing so well his native dramatic power, and his great enjoyment of good comedy and tragedy, I asked him if he ever went to the theatre. 'Never.' Bearing in mind his delight in the best music, and his familiarity with many scores of celebrated compositions in opera, oratorio, and orchestral music, I said, 'How about the opera? Do you ever go?' 'Never.' Anyone who knew him well would not have to ask why. I knew it was Paul's reason.

"But Mr. Trumbull, in the *Sunday School Times*, after Dr. Babcock left us, related two

incidents which explained and illustrated his reason, which I here quote. 'When lunching one day with some business men, Dr. Babcock was offered a cigar, and a hope was expressed that he would join the others in a social smoke. Instantly his face lighted up with one of his winning smiles, and he said to the speaker: "Thank you very much for your kindness. But you know I have a profession that means more to me than anything else in the world. I guard it very jealously. I am liable to be called out at any time of day or night, in the service of my profession, and if I were called suddenly to the bedside of some one who was dying, it wouldn't seem just right, would it?—if I had the odor of tobacco in my clothes and on my breath. So you will pardon me, won't you, if I don't join you in this?"

"'At another time one of the wealthier members of his congregation offered him the use of his box at the opera through the season, and instantly this reply came: "I can't thank you enough for the kindness you are showing me. But you know how a surgeon in practising his profession is not only obliged to keep his hands and linen free from dirt, but he must keep himself aseptically clean as well. Now, in my profession, I have to be even more careful than a surgeon, and so I must be careful about things that might do harm in even the *most indirect way*. You will understand, I know, why I cannot accept the great kindness you are offering me, though I do thank you for it from the bottom of my heart."'" [1]

[1] "Maltbie Davenport Babcock." By Chas. E. Robinson, D.D.

Here was the exquisite tact of a perfect gentleman combined with the highest standard of conduct. His service controlled in his life and actions. Here is a great simple question suggested that goes at once to the very heart of this whole matter of questioned things: Should not service —thought for others whom we would win by both direct and indirect touch—control every one of us who belongs to Jesus Christ?

The Law of Love.

There is a very simple law to follow here. It is Paul's law. He got it from the Holy Spirit. It is *the law of love.* It speaks thus:

Whatever dulls the sensitiveness of my spirit towards God, or takes the fine, tender edge off my thought of Him must be ruled out, for He is my Lord.

Whatever injures or weakens my body, or affects my mastery of it, must be ruled out, for it is the temple of my Lord.

Whatever affects hurtfully the earnestness and clearness of my witness to Jesus Christ before others must be ruled out, for it was His parting wish that I be a witness for Him to all men.

Whatever lessens in any way, even through prejudice or misunderstandings, the results of my service must be ruled out, for to influence men for Him is to be the passion of my life.

Whatever may cause my brother to stumble in his Christian life must be ruled out, for that would grieve Jesus.

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